

The London School of Economics and Political Science

***Exploring the role of the youth group in adolescent development
under contextual adversity: A comparative study of adolescents
belonging to peacebuilding groups and gangs in Colombia***

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Abstract

Research on adolescent development simultaneously portrays the youth group as contributing to positive and negative outcomes, an inconsistency partially due to the reduction of the youth group to a mediator variable in developmental studies. This PhD reframes the youth group as a system of shared meanings and participation to study its influence on developmental outcomes in disadvantaged contexts. Using a mixed methods approach combining qualitative interviews, participant observation, and surveys, I compare disadvantaged youths who belong to peacebuilding groups and gangs across three outcomes; possible-selves, moral reasoning and practical reasoning about violence, tracing how these outcomes connect to group-level understandings of peace and violence. Study I explores whether guided participation in peacebuilding activities influences youths' expectations of who they want to be in the future. It finds that participation shapes the youths' evaluations of what comprises a desirable possible-self. Study II compares group-level understandings of violence and moral reasoning about violence among members of peacebuilding groups and gangs. It finds that members of both groups identify individuals as agents and victims of violence, however only gang members think of groups as capable of harming and being harmed. This translates into between-group differences in moral reasoning about violence, where a higher proportion of gang members say it is morally right to use violence to defend group, respect, and honour. Study III measures differences in the endorsement of four violence motives by degree of gang involvement among at-risk youths. While the likelihood of violent behaviour, victimisation, and violence in self-defence increases alongside the degree of gang involvement, the endorsement of collective violence characterized gang members only. Combined, these findings show that group-level meaning-making processes and participation contain criteria of righteousness and desirability that inform models of social relations and the youths' positioning in relation to the disadvantaged context where they live. A focus on group cultures contributes to the understanding of variability in individual developmental outcomes observed in disadvantaged contexts and call for appropriate policies to support adolescent development in these environments.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“You know what? You learn a lot in the youth group, but you also learn a lot in the gang. Let’s say you learn the good things here and the bad things there. And that’s how you learn to survive” Male participant, 18 years old.

1.1. Background and motivation

In 2013, I travelled to Barrancabermeja in Colombia to collect data for my master’s thesis, a project focused on internally displaced young adults. During my time there, I heard stories of suffering, war, and uprooting, but these were often combined with narratives that conveyed purpose and hope about the future. In particular, some groups of young people seemed determined to improve things for their peers and their community, a conclusion I reached after unexpectedly coming to meet a youth group called “Young peacebuilders”. These adolescents would meet after school, every other afternoon, to talk about the problems youth like them faced in their community and design action plans to act on them. I could not spend much time with the group due to the tight timeframe of my fieldwork. Nevertheless, their strong friendship and sense of camaraderie, as well as their determination to reach their goals caught my attention and made me curious about the role a group like this could play in supporting youth development in a context where poverty, crime, narco-traffic, and political violence are a part of daily life.

I went back to Barrancabermeja two years later, this time as a PhD student doing exploratory work for the first study of my project. I wanted to study the role of peacebuilding groups in promoting resilience among young people in violent contexts, but the first immersion in the field painted a more complex picture. I had discussions with a few youngsters who described their experiences as both members of peacebuilding groups and members of local gangs and spoke about how they learned useful lessons in both types of groups. This early discovery prompted me to think about the “youth group” from a different perspective. Perhaps youth groups were not just to be approached as mediator variables in models predicting positive or negative developmental outcomes (Almeida, Correia, & Marinho, 2010; Ellis & Zarbatany, 2007; Simons-Morton & Farhat, 2010), but rather as socialisation spaces where young people elaborate shared understandings of what is useful, desirable, and right. In fact, previous literature on the topic had portrayed the peer group as a

space where young people create their own (sub)culture and make innovations of their own (Brown, 1990; Fine, 2012; Harris, 1995).

The former led me to revise the design of the PhD and proved fundamental in inspiring the research questions and the overall argument of the dissertation. At a general level, my research work concerns the differential ways in which young people growing up at the margins, in communities marked by social and political violence, make sense of the social world, social relationships, and themselves. On the theory level, I am interested in morality, with particular attention to how it is experienced in everyday life by marginalized young people. In line with previous psychological work, I consider morality to be a meaning-mediated socio-cultural psychological construct (Jensen, 2011; Moscovici, Jovchelovitch, & Wagoner, 2013; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987). In this dissertation, I argue that the youth group is best approached as a cultural community where young people construct value-laden shared understandings. I further argue that the study of said shared understanding is crucial because it yields more nuanced descriptions of individual-level socio-cognitive outcomes among young people, according to the type of youth group individuals belong to and the degree of involvement with it.

In the field, I could observe the youth groups in the community competing in importance against more traditional spaces of youth socialisation such as the home and the school. Their importance derived, in part, from the fact that peer groups tend to fill the institutional vacuum that exists in marginalized contexts (Bourgois, 2003). Some of the groups available to young people were peacebuilding, church, and sports groups as well as gangs organised around the micro-traffic of drugs and football teams. Informed by the body of research appraising the peer group as a cultural community where shared meanings are developed through participation (Brown, 1990; Chen, 2011; Kirshner, 2008, 2009; Rogoff, 1995, 2003b; Wenger, 2000), my questions on an empirical level focused on knowing whether and how the type of youth group individuals belonged to (i.e. gangs or peacebuilding groups) and the level of involvement with it were associated with three specific socio-cognitive outcomes: moral reasoning about violence, practical reasoning about violence, and possible selves.

The analytical approach I employ in this dissertation is socio-cultural and was shaped by the above-mentioned literature, the early stages of my fieldwork, and the work of Jovchelovitch (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2013; Jovchelovitch, Priego-Hernández, & Glăveanu, 2013) addressing the role of both culture and socio-economic status on cognition and development. This analytical approach facilitates a focus on two levels: group-level shared understandings and individual-level socio-cognitive outcomes. The innovation of the present research is to ask whether and how group-level value-laden shared understandings -in this work, shared understandings of violence and peace- intersect with moral and practical reasoning about violence, and the youths' evaluations of their selves in the future.

From a political perspective, I wanted to challenge widespread assumptions of the poor living in violent contexts as a homogeneous mass (NAS, 2018; Pearce, 2007). I sought to do this by focusing on the diversity and the richness of the collectively held systems of symbolic representations utilised by young people to structure and give meaning to themselves and their social relations (Lowe, 2016, 2018). Recent work in person-centred psychological anthropology emphasises the variation between people in the same demographic groups and locations in the cultural frames they use to interpret their economic disadvantage, showing this is consequential for how they navigate chronic poverty (Strauss, 2018). In the present work, I focus on young people -a key demographic group for scholars interested in the reproduction of violence in marginal contexts- and study the collectively held systems of symbolic representations of violence and peace within the youth group, emphasising diversity over homogenisation in the study of young people in disadvantaged contexts.

Having trained in comparative human development and having conducted research in disadvantaged communities in Latin America and with minority populations in the U.S., I had been grappling for some time about how to best combine the study of poverty, violence, and disadvantage with the core proposition that culture and mind make each other up (Shweder, 1990). Unfortunately, the study of culture in relation to poverty had historically gotten off to a rocky start. The thesis of “culture of poverty” proposed by Lewis based on his study of Puerto Rican families in New York City (Lewis, 1966) argued that chronic poverty fosters a set of values, beliefs,

practices and attitudes that are acquired and reproduced by impoverished individuals. This would create a culture that operates as a poverty trap, because it would make individuals psychologically unready to fare better economically even if the structural conditions that gave rise to poverty were to disappear (Small, Harding, & Lamont, 2010).

Since its formulation, the culture of poverty thesis has been challenged by social scientist from various disciplines, who have critiqued its many theoretical inconsistencies and its blatant disregard for structural factors shaping the lives of the poor (Bourgois, 2003; Small et al., 2010; Valentine, 1968). However, traces of this line of argumentation persist in how the poor are studied and represented in the social sciences. An example is the characterisation of the poor as having “poor mental power” or how “poverty impedes cognitive functioning” (Mani, Mullainathan, Shafir, & Zhao, 2013; Vohs, 2013). These portrayals are coupled with a scarcity of empirical evidence to inform more accurately how the poor make sense and explain their current situations, options, and decisions (Small et al., 2010). This empirical evidence, it is argued below, should not be produced solely on the basis of comparisons between middle and low-income populations, but result from studies comparing differences between groups and between individuals within low income communities.

The most contemporary body of work on the role of poverty on behaviour has been careful to avoid explanations based on the intrinsic characteristics of the poor. Social psychologists and behavioural economists alike emphasize the power of the situation, arguing that it is the exposure to scarcity and the cognitive load it creates what leads to sub-optimal behaviour, decreased attention and inhibitory control, and myopic decision made by impoverished people (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Browman, Destin, Kearney, & Levine, 2019; Shah, Shafir, & Mullainathan, 2015; Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2017). The crucial message is that *anyone* in those circumstances would act the same regardless of socio-economic status. This line of research has produced a sizeable body of evidence on how people respond to poverty cognitively, behaviourally, and socially (see Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2017 for a systematic review of the available evidence in psychology, and Fry, Langley, & Shelton, 2017 for a review of focused on young people).

Given the amount of evidence on how people respond to poverty, a necessary next step is to understand why people living in the same impoverished neighbourhoods and communities differ in the strategies they employ to navigate poverty and in their ability to escape it (Small et al., 2010). As a discipline, psychology has much to offer to help answer this question. Psychological studies on the topic of poverty have been critiqued by scholars from other social sciences, old and new, as being overly deterministic (Bourgois, 2003; Leacock, 1967). However, with newer methodological and conceptual tools to avoid past biases, the field is uniquely equipped to contribute with insights to the links between cognition, poverty, and culture. In this research work I seek to advance two points, one theoretical and one methodological, to study social development of young people in contexts of disadvantage.

First, the disciplinary emphasis on automatic, biased, and unconscious responses to poverty ought to give space to psychological approaches centred on meaning-making processes by low-income individuals, and study the meanings they construct about themselves, their decisions, values, and behaviours (Lowe, 2016; Small et al., 2010; Strauss, 2018). A growing body of evidence suggests that the study of meaning-making in the form of shared understandings, frames, values, repertoires, narratives, symbolic boundaries, and institutions -in other words, analytical tools to study culture (Small et al., 2010)- can contribute to understand the individual variations observed in community participation, mobility, violence and other crucial themes in the study of poverty (Bourgois, 2003; Lowe, 2016, 2018; Patterson, 2000; Strauss, 2018; Young, 2004). Bringing this into play, a core assumption of the present work is the conceptualisation of contexts of disadvantage as rich and plural representational fields, where different cultural communities co-exist, and where meaning-making processes, shared understandings, practices, and valuations of the world mediate the development process of individuals, just like they do in any other context (Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2015; Jovchelovitch, 2007; Leung & Shek, 2011).

Second, comparisons between middle and low-income populations need to be complemented with comparisons “within” low income contexts. This expansion of the research design has the potential to increase our understanding of the significant variation found in this population (Klein, 2005; Strauss, 2018; Taylor et al., 2005).

Within context comparisons have the additional benefit of counteracting the tendency in both public and academic discourse “to distinguish between a dominant middle-class culture and a deviant subculture of the poor” (Strauss, 2018, p. 355).

Back in Barrancabermeja, I started to note how young people described the various youth groups co-existing in the community in terms of two broad categories; those connected to “the war” (*la guerra*) and those connected to peace (*la paz*). This classification made sense in a city that has been, and still is, a “red city” (Gill, 2016), an oil town in the centre of the Magdalena region that has grappled for decades with severe violence resulting from the Colombian political conflict, the fight for natural resources, and its strategic value for the routes used by the drug trade. More generally, this classification was significant in the context of the -then ongoing- negotiations of the peace accords between the government and the FARC guerrilla, which was mobilising broader societal discourses related to the transition of the country from war to peace, and the sustainability of peace in Colombia.

Peace and violence were essential themes in the contexts I was set to study. The topics of violence, peace, and peacebuilding are entire bodies of literature on their own (Arendt, 1970; Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015; Fiske & Rai, 2015; Galtung, 1969; Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, & Zwi, 2002; Pearce, 2007; Rettberg, 2013; Rousseau, 1991). The scholarly work on each of these topics is impedingly vast, rendering impossible an in-depth review of each one of them within the confines of one dissertation. This, however, should not prevent conceptual clarity. Here, violence is defined as the intentional and direct physical or psychological hurt on one's self or the Other (Pearce, 2007). Implied in this definition is that violence includes physical harm but also the assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004). This definition of violence is sufficiently narrow to allow a focus on the psychological study of interpersonal harm and sufficiently wide to capture the value-laden evaluations in how young people make sense of the social world, the social relations, and themselves.

Peace and peacebuilding, on the other side, were used by young people interchangeably. Young people referred to peace as a state of the social world, while peacebuilding alluded to the actions required to achieve a peaceful environment. In

line with previous work on chronic violence in post-conflict societies, in this work peacebuilding is understood to be about building the conditions in which people can live together without violence, including the enactment of counter-performative actions to violent ones (Pearce, 2007). I work with this definition of peace(building) by youth in transitioning societies (Berents, 2018; Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015) while recognising that the concept is highly heterogeneous and shaped by multiple actors, agendas, and definitions of conflict, peace, and peace promotion (Rettberg, 2013).

The topics of peace and violence had contextual and historical relevance in the specific contexts where this research took place and in Colombia more generally. In addition to this relevance, a focus on the shared understandings of peace and violence by young people within the youth group offered the possibility of studying in-depth some of the taken for granted assumptions embedded in their thinking about the social world, social relationships, themselves. Understandings of violence, for example, hang on assumptions about selfhood, the demarcation of the territories of the self, and what does and does not entail harm (Goffman, 1971; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 2003). Understandings of peace contain assumptions about how social relations ought to be conducted and evaluations about the aspects of the social world that ought to be changed (Berents, 2018; Pearce, 2007).

As described above, psychology has come a long way in avoiding explanations of poverty based on the intrinsic characteristics of the poor. However, the study of morality among this population is still framed within a deficit model and has not begun to integrate the worldviews of people living in poor and violent contexts in how morality is theorised. For example, studies with violence-exposed young people in Colombia conclude that young people's moral development is hampered because they do not act in accordance to what they think is right but according to their expectations of what others will do (Posada & Wainryb, 2008). The fact that the participants' expectations paint a social world where most people would steal and hurt others is not engaged in this research. Instead, these findings are taken to demonstrate a decreased capability on the side of violence-exposed young people to view themselves and others as moral agents (Posada & Wainryb, 2008). Researchers underscore two points to support their argument about decreased moral agency

among violence-exposed youths; narratives that portray their harmful acts as simply “happening” without indications of a sense of agency and ownership of such acts, and narratives that indicate a decreased capability to represent one’s and other people’s internal motives, reasons, preferences and emotions when committing harmful acts (Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2010).

There is a larger debate in psychology on how to theorise cultural variations in the extension of the moral domain. This is, how to understand variations in what is and what is not experienced as belonging to the moral realm by people in different cultures (Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993; Jensen, 2011; Killen, 2018; Killen & Coplan, 2011; Miller, 2010; Shweder, 1982; Shweder et al., 2007; Turiel, Killen, & Helwig, 1987), and how to understand variations in morality within the same culture (Wainryb & Turiel, 1995). Surely, this is a debate about the extent to which variabilities in cultural assumptions, values, causal beliefs and practices should be integrated into the psychological theorisation of morality. The side arguing for a single moral domain -this is, a moral domain restricted to justice and harm concerns with universal definitions of these terms- has started to apply this view to the study of morality among young people in poor and violent environments (Posada & Wainryb, 2008; Recchia & Wainryb, 2011; Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2010) without accounting for the meaning-making processes guiding what is experienced as right and desirable by people living in poor and violent communities.

In the characterisation of young people described above, there is no in-depth exploration of young people’s criteria of what is desirable or right concerning the social world, social relationships, and themselves. Whether and how these criteria indicate the existence of an expanded moral domain falls outside the scope of this dissertation. Yet, a first step in this direction is to produce adequate descriptions of what is considered right and desirable by young people in relation to the social world, social relationships, and themselves in these contexts. Doing otherwise risks portraying the poor as unable to reach reasonable conclusions about what is desirable, valuable, and right. Further, because the implicit comparison group in previous studies has been middle-class non-violence exposed youngsters, previous research does not provide elements to improve our understanding of the variations in the criteria of rightfulness and desirability to be found between young people living

in disadvantaged contexts. One prime place to study these is the youth group, where understandings of the social world are co-constructed by the members of the group.

Bringing this all together, a focus on the youth group allowed me to delineate a boundary around a space whose analysis could help me achieve two things I wanted to do. First, studying how processes of meaning-making and participation link with socio-cognitive outcomes among young people in contexts of disadvantage. Second, I sought to look at this issue using a comparative strategy to gain insights from the often-overlooked variation that exists in adolescent outcomes in disadvantaged contexts. The research work reported in this PhD was designed and carried out according to these ideas, which were consequently tested empirically. By using this approach, I hope to contribute to the refinement of our understanding of the role of meaning-making processes and participation in the youth group in shaping socio-cognitive outcomes among young people growing up in poor and violent contexts.

1.2 Research problem

Individuals have a basic motivation to join groups to fulfil needs of belonging and attachment (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). One of the most transcendental changes during adolescence are those around peer interactions (Brown & Larson, 2009; Harris, 1995). During this developmental stage, the peer group becomes an important space for consolidation of relationships and identity formation at a time where the importance of social acceptance, conformity to peers and susceptibility to peer influence are at their peak (NAS, 2002). It is only understandable that research on adolescent development has sought to understand the impact of the peer group on positive and negative developmental outcomes.

The ecological and systems approaches frame most research focusing on adolescent development in contextual disadvantage. It is from this literature that we know most about the role of the peer group in shaping adolescent developmental outcomes in these contexts. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Ford & Lerner, 1992; Geldhof et al., 2014; Lerner, 2015; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Masten, 2001). In this literature, the peer group is taken to be a relevant micro level ecology of adolescent development. Like the family or the school, it is known to influence social, school and psychological adjustment (Chen, 2011). Research on adaptive development

emphasises the positive influence the peer group has on various developmental outcomes, while research on risk factors emphasises its negative influence, with minimal dialogue between the two strands of work. This has contributed to the creation of inconsistencies within the peer group literature. For example, “sense of belonging to the youth group” is described as serving both positive and negative developmental outcomes. Sense of belonging has been found to be an outcome of gang membership, which in turn contributes to continued gang engagement (Klein, 2006; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, & Tobin, 2003). It has also been found to be an outcome of youth development programmes and to contribute to positive youth development (Iwasaki, 2016). These parallel findings have been reported for other outcomes related to the youth group; such as identity (Baird, 2015; Flanagan, Martinez, & Cumsille, 2011; Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012; Kirshner, 2009) and group norms (Nesdale & Lawson, 2011; Siu, Shek, & Law, 2012), yet these contradictions are not engaged by psychological research focused on the role of the youth group in development.

Research on identity development reveals the youth group as a rich representational field. Studies focusing on civic identity in the context of youth organising show the mores and practices of the group shaping young people’s understandings of themselves as engaged citizens (Flanagan, 2003; Flanagan et al., 2011; Kirshner, 2009). Research on identity development within the gang shows the “ganging process” as grounded in shared understandings of the meaning of male success in a specific local world (Baird, 2015, 2017; Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012). Therefore, research on identity in relation to the youth group evidences the complex process of shared meanings and practices that organise the life in the youth group. It also hints at the normative aspect involved in these processes. Something similar happens with the study of the impact of group norms on developmental outcomes. Group norms are described as prosocial or antisocial but no further exploration or elaboration is carried on in developmental studies (Hartup, 1996). Evaluations of righteousness and desirability would seem to permeate relationships, norms, and identity processes within the youth group, yet this value aspect has been left largely unanalysed, especially from a comparative point of view. These “double-edged” constructs are relational and meaning dependent, therefore research that approaches the youth group in terms of shared understandings is needed.

In this dissertation, I set to study processes of shared meaning-making and participation in the youth group (Fine, 2012; Rogoff, 2003b; Wenger, 2000) with a focus on how these link to socio-cognitive outcomes among adolescent group members. Specifically, I combine individual and group levels of analysis by studying group-level understandings of violence and group-level understandings of peace, and three individual level outcomes; moral reasoning in relation to violence, practical reasoning in relation to violence, and possible selves in relation to participation in a peacebuilding group. In addition, I seek to determine how these outcomes vary by type of youth group and by degree of involvement in the youth group.

A contribution of this PhD is bringing to the forefront meaning-making processes and participation within the youth group and to study whether and how they link to individual level socio-cognitive outcomes among its members. In the case of the studies presented here, the focus is on shared meanings about violence and peace, both of which are relevant themes in the context where the research took place. A second contribution of the PhD is to approach meaning-making processes and participation from a comparative perspective, by studying variations in individual level outcomes by type of youth group and by degree of youth group involvement. By taking this comparative approach, I seek to contribute to the field's understanding of the high variation found in developmental outcomes among young people growing up in poor and violent contexts.

1.3. Research context

1.3.1 A society in transition: Brief overview of Colombia's peace process

Colombia is a country in northern South America, with a population of 49.8 million people (DANE, 2018b). It is a upper-middle income country with a GINI index of 50.8 (World Bank, 2018). Colombia is a unitary republic made up of 32 departments and one Capital District, Bogotá D.C. The country has borders with Venezuela and Brazil to the east, Ecuador and Peru to the south-west, and Panama to the north-west along with Pacific and Caribbean coastlines.

At the time of this research, Colombia was undergoing a transition from war to peace. After more than five decades of political conflict, peace negotiations were being held between the Colombian government and the FARC, the biggest guerrilla group in the country. The political conflict left 8.7 million victims and some of the largest numbers of internally displaced people in the world (ACNUR, 2014; CNMH, 2013; IDMC, 2018; Registro Único de Víctimas, 2018). The conflict is a low intensity (i.e. internal), asymmetric war between the government, multiple left-wing guerrillas, and right-wing paramilitary groups (Menjívar, 2001). Land ownership and exploitation have been at the core of the war since its beginnings in the '60s. Fighting for lands and territory was aggravated by the assimilation of the drug trade and the illegal mining of gold and coal into the financing scheme of the armed groups involved (CNMH, 2013).

It is not possible to do justice to the complexity of the Colombian political conflict within a few pages. Comprehensive studies on this topic have been done by various researchers, most notably by Karl (2017), Palacios (1995) and Sanchez (2007). My aim in this section is to convey the most important developments of the peace negotiations and the political climate of the years in between. Throughout this time of social and political transition, shifting discourses of peace, justice, victimhood and reconciliation were put forward and contested by different actors in the society. A subject of intense debate in the political arena was the one about the trade-offs between justice and peace, as was how peace would materialise. For example, a core site of contestation was whether the achievement of peace would result from or cause the improvement of other economic and socio-political factors. While the government portrayed the improvement of economic and social problems as contingent on achieving peace, people in conflict-affected areas sustained that peace would rather be the result of improvement in factors such as poverty, inequality, and exclusion (McFee, 2016). This point of contestation is significant because the left-wing guerrillas had portrayed poverty and inequality as justifications of their fight since the beginning of the conflict. It was in this transitional context that this PhD explored peace and violence sense making by young people and their participation in peacebuilding and violence as everyday activities in the context of the youth group.

After four years of peace negotiations, spanning between August 2012 and August 2016, the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla reached a peace accord. The government called on a plebiscite to subject the accords to a popular vote seeking to strengthen their legitimacy. The accords had been reached through secluded talks, away from public scrutiny in Havana, Cuba. The plebiscite was held in October 2016 and resulted in the peace accords being narrowly rejected (50.22% vs 49.78%). The voting pattern reflected a clear divide in the country, where the areas with the largest amounts of victims and exposure to the conflict overwhelmingly supported the deal, while voters in urban centres, largely removed from the violence, were against it. The plebiscite results triggered a brief period of renegotiation between the government and the political parties and religious groups that mobilised the vote against the accords. Although the majority of disagreements were settled, demands to alter core aspects of the accords, specifically those relating to transitional justice and those against the granting of political participation to the FARC were not met. The result was a revised peace agreement between the government and the FARC that was ratified by Congress a month after the plebiscite, and an opposition that declared itself against the peace process arguing that the accords secured peace at the expense of justice (Aidi, 2016).

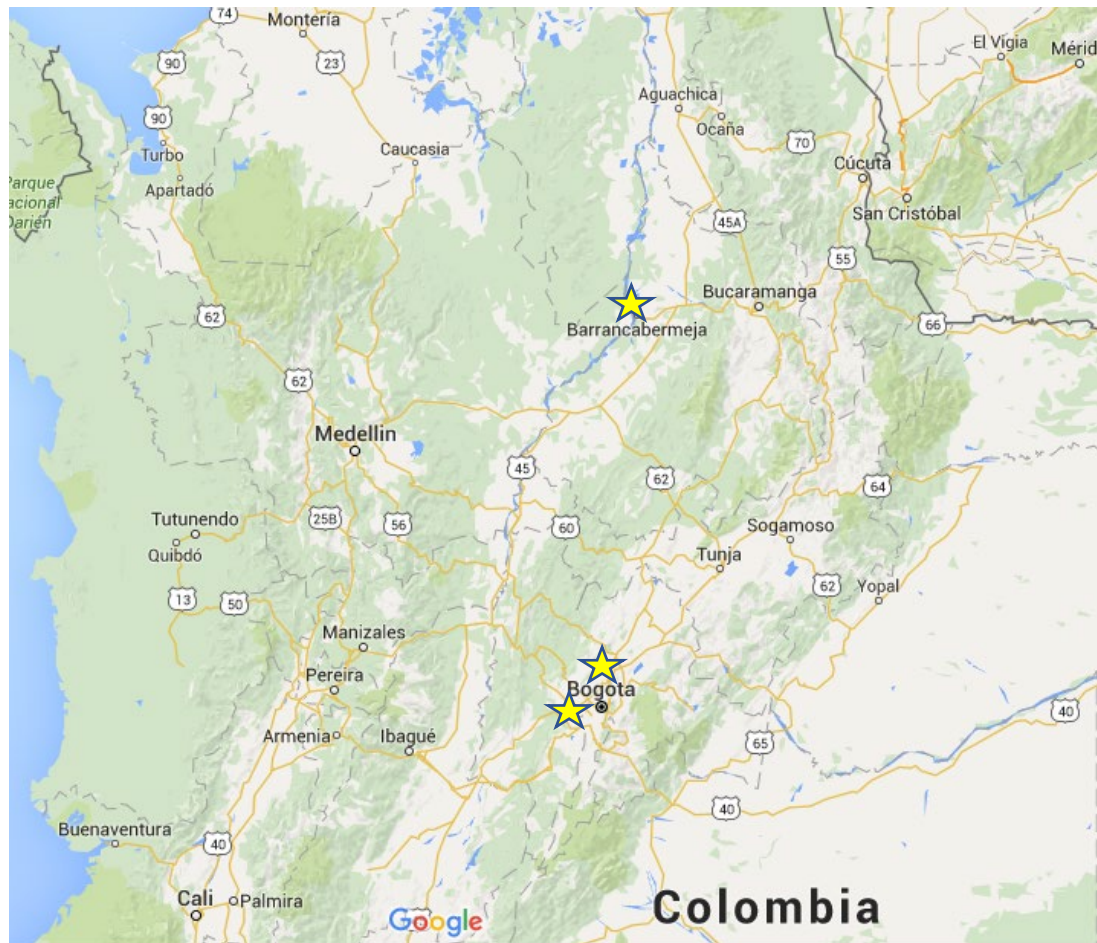
The implementation of the peace accords started in December 2016. As of March 2018, 21% of the stipulations in the accords had been fully implemented, 9% were at an intermediate implementation level, 31% had been minimally implemented, and 39% had not been initiated (Kroc Institute, 2018). By mid-2018, general elections were held in Colombia which were won by the opposition, running on a campaign that promised to change core parts of the peace agreement to achieve real justice, under the premise “He who does it pays for it” (Pinzón, 2018). In the meantime, the demobilisation of the FARC stipulated in the peace agreement left power vacuums in the areas formerly controlled by them. This coincided in time with a steep increase of internal displacements of communities and the killing of community and human rights leaders in rural areas of the country as well as in some small cities, executed criminal organisations linked to the narcotraffic and paramilitary ex-combatants (IDMC, 2018; Restrepo, 2018).

1.3.2. Local worlds: Barrancabermeja, Soacha, and Bogotá

The previous section hinted at the differential impact the conflict had in rural versus urban areas in Colombia. Even though Colombians saw a steep increase in conflict-related violence in urban centres in the early 2000s, the war had historically been fought with more intensity in the countryside and small towns and villages in rural areas (CNMH, 2013). In turn, urban centres have for decades been resettling places for internally displaced people fleeing violence in their home towns. The vast majority of those who resettle do so in the outskirts of the cities, aggravating their baseline vulnerability by being exposed to severe poverty traps (Ibáñez & Moya, 2010). Studies on the understandings of violence by people living in poor urban communities in Colombia show that they identify violence related problems as the most important type of problem they face (Moser & McIlwaine, 2000, 2004).

The studies of this PhD were conducted in low income neighbourhoods located in the outskirts of the cities of Barrancabermeja and Bogotá, and in the autonomous municipality of Soacha. Figure 2 below, shows the geographic locations of the three.

Figure 1.1: Location of study sites



Map data: Google, Google Maps

The city of Barrancabermeja is in the Colombian province of Santander. Barrancabermeja has a population of 187,300 inhabitants; 58,400 of them are registered victims of the conflict (Registro Único de Víctimas, 2018). Twenty-two per cent of the city's population has unsatisfied basic needs, while 77% qualifies for social benefits and poverty alleviation programmes (DANE, 2018a; SISBEN, 2018). The first study and part of the second study of the PhD were conducted in Barrancabermeja's 7th commune. The commune has 24,700 inhabitants, 92% of which qualify for social subsidies based on living conditions (SISBEN, 2010). Soacha, the site of the second study, has a population of 399,000, out of which 43,000 are registered victims of the conflict (DANE, 2018a; Registro Único de Víctimas, 2018). Soacha is commonly considered a borough of Bogotá, but it is an autonomous municipality to the south-west of the city. About 59% of the population

of Soacha qualify for social benefits and poverty alleviation programmes (SISBEN, 2018).

Barrancabermeja and Soacha were each affected by the political conflict in different ways and for different reasons. Nevertheless, both locations have in common that they have been contested territory by guerrilla groups, organised criminal bands, and paramilitary groups, and were sites of massacres and systematic disappearances during the peak years of the conflict in the early 2000s (Cabrera Cabrera & Romero Tunarosa, 2012; CID, 2010; Gill, 2016). Both locations have received large amounts of internally displaced people, but the violence in both has also caused people to leave following threats and killings. At present, both Barrancabermeja and Soacha face high levels of violence and homicides carried out by criminal groups connected to the narcotraffic. Most follow a paramilitary structure and actively recruit youngsters to join their illegal activities (Andrades Cardozo, 2008; Cabrera Cabrera & Romero Tunarosa, 2012; Dale, 2014; OIP, 2014, 2015).

Despite their violent history, or perhaps in contestation to it, Barrancabermeja and Soacha have active civil society organisations that include women's, victims, and youth organisations led by local people. Many of these have been organising and working for decades in these locations. These organisations developed in an effort to resist human rights violations and other abuses against the civil society on the hands of guerrillas, paramilitary groups, the police and the military. Also, institutions such as NGOs and the church have worked in both cities for a long time. The third sector was instrumental in attending the needs of the population during the peak of the conflict. These institutions carried on humanitarian work and promoted human rights, while keeping the rest of the country aware of any human rights violations as they were happening (Bernal Cuellar, 2014; CID, 2010; Cortina & Lafuente, 2018; Gill, 2016; UNTFHS, 2012).

The capital city of Bogotá was the third site of data collection of the PhD. Bogotá has a population of 6.8 million (DANE, 2005). Bogotá is the main political and economic centre of the country. It generates about one-third of Colombia's gross domestic product with 16% of the country's population. Economic inequality within the city is high. Bogotá has both, the higher income per capita and the highest unemployment rate in the country. The city is highly heterogeneous which is

explained, in part, by the large number of people that moves from all over the country. Most of them arrive in the poorest neighbourhoods, forced either by economic reasons or by violence (CRD, 2018; Rueda García, 2003). Bogotá has 350,000 registered victims (Registro Único de Víctimas, 2018). For several years now, concern about urban security has grown in the city. In 2016, the city created the Secretariat of Security, Coexistence and Justice, an institution with the explicit mission of designing public policy with a focus on security (Consejo de Bogotá, 2016). Young people in a situation of social vulnerability are of particular concern, and so there are organizations, institutions, programmes, interventions, and NGOs that focus on at-risk youths. The third study of the PhD took place at one organisation working with youths identified to be at risk.

1.4. Overview of aims and chapters

This PhD has been prepared in the thesis-by-publication format in accordance with guidelines established by the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Sciences at the London School of Economics. The thesis is comprised of an introduction, theory and methods chapter, three empirical studies presented as academic journal articles (Chapters 3-5), a discussion and conclusions chapter (Chapter 6), and appendices. The organising theme across chapters is the youth group, with each empirical chapter addressing specific questions about meaning-making processes and participation in it. To allow continuity across chapters, each journal article has a preface where I outline the connection of the study with the overarching theme of the PhD. I was the principal investigator, data analyst, and primary author of each journal article. Dr Sandra Jovchelovitch provided intellectual guidance and was the secondary author for each paper. All other sections of this thesis were solely authored by myself.

Aims and chapters:

The organising theme of this thesis is the youth group. In this work, meaning-making processes and participation in the group by young people are taken as processes of human development and as the focus of the analysis. Both, meaning-making processes and participation were hypothesised to have an impact on socio-cognitive outcomes among members of the youth group. As such, each of the

empirical studies in this dissertation addresses specific aims and empirical questions related to this hypothesis.

The first sub-aim was to elaborate a conceptual and methodological framework that enables the study of the youth group as a system of shared meanings and participation, from a social and cultural psychological approach. This aim is covered in Chapter 2 “Theory and Methods”, where I review the literature on adolescent development under contextual disadvantage with a focus on the youth group. In it, I present the evidence on the youth group available in ecological studies of adolescent development in contextual disadvantage and contrast the available evidence on civic engagement youth groups and gangs. The second part of the chapter describes the methodological design of this PhD and discusses the rationale of the mixed methods approach to the study the youth group.

The second-sub aim comprised to establish whether meaning-making processes pertaining to salient content of the social sphere could be studied at the level of the youth group. In the case of this project, this content was violence and peace, as they were salient topics in the context where this research took place. This sub-aim is covered in Chapter 3 and 4. Chapter 3 focuses on group level understandings of peace among members of a peacebuilding youth group in Barrancabermeja, Colombia (n=31). I use Rogoff’s ideas of guided participation and cultural communities (1995, 2003b) to study the elaboration of shared peacebuilding goals by the group and how these are implemented. Participation in the peacebuilding group entailed designing and running workshops with children and peers, as well as public campaigns in the community. Chapter 4 takes a comparative approach and focuses on group level understanding of violence among youths who belong to peacebuilding groups (n=30) and gangs (n=34). Together, these chapters explore sense making and demonstrate that the youth group is a space where youths elaborate shared meanings pertaining salient aspects of the context where they live, which in these studies concern the issues of peace and violence sense making. Both studies show that rich understandings of these notions can be observed at the level of the youth group.

The third sub-aim entailed determining whether meaning-making processes and practices in the youth group have an observable impact on socio-cognitive outcomes

among its members. Two empirical chapters addressed this aim. Chapter 3 explores the connections between the group's peacebuilding goals, participation in peacebuilding activities and the group members' possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004). It finds that participation in peacebuilding activities, framed by the group's goals, leads group members to enact new roles and deploy skills that are taken into their ideas of who they can be in the future. Also, participation in the group and peacebuilding sense making help shape youth's ideas of what constitutes a desirable and valuable possible self. Chapter 4 focuses on moral reasoning about violence. It focuses on group level understandings of violence and explores whether such understandings translate into moral reasoning about violence among members of violent and non-violent groups. The study demonstrates that the group level understandings of violence map into the moral reasoning about violence among members of violent and non-violent youth groups.

The fourth sub-aim was to determine whether variations in the type of group young people belong to (Chapter 4), and variations in the level of engagement with the youth group (Chapter 5) are associated with variations in socio-cognitive functioning among young people. Chapter 4 compares group level understandings of violence and moral reasoning about violence among members of violent and non-violent youth groups. We use the theory of virtuous violence (Fiske & Rai, 2015) and find critical differences in the group level understandings of violence between groups. These include differences in the attributed causes of violence and definitions of the agents of violence. We also find between-group differences in moral reasoning about violence between both types of groups. We show that the differences in group-level understandings of violence map into how young people from violent and non-violent youth groups reason morally about violence. In Chapter 5, we use the findings from Chapter 4 to formulate hypotheses about practical reasoning about violence to be tested among a sample of at-risk youths. Using a survey (n=370), we evaluate differences in the likelihood of endorsing violence by degree of gang involvement. Specifically, we measure the likelihood of violent behaviour, victimisation, and endorsement of the use of violence following four motives: self-defence, honour, reputation, and group. We find that degree of gang involvement predicts an increase in general violence (i.e. violent behaviour, victimization, and endorsement of violence in self-defence), but only gang

membership predicts the endorsement of violence with collectivistic undertones, this is, violence to defend one's group. These findings are congruent with the findings of group-level understandings of violence from Chapter 4. These results suggest that violence is a bundle of significance rather than a dichotomic outcome and that its meaning is coherent with young people's practical reasoning about violence, with differences emerging alongside the degree of involvement with a gang.

The fifth sub-aim was to argue that the youth group, viewed as a system of shared meanings and participation, constitutes an essential level of analysis in the study of adolescent development that can inform and contribute to our understanding of adolescent development in contexts of disadvantage. This argument is developed through a critical discussion of the empirical findings, with a focus on their significance for an improved understanding of the variation in socio-cognitive outcomes among adolescent growing up under contextual adversity (Chapter 6). Far from being a collection of individuals, the youth group is a space where shared meaning-making emerges through the youths' participation in the youth group. The empirical work carried out in this dissertation contributes with the novel finding that group level understandings of violence and peace cohere with young people's moral and practical reasoning about violence and with their evaluations of what counts as a desirable and valuable possible self. Further, the research work shows that these individual-level socio-cognitive outcomes vary according to the type of youth group young people belong to and the degree of involvement with it. The former provides empirical support to the argument that the youth group, viewed as a cultural community, is a crucial level of analysis that can improve our understanding of individual-level variation among young people growing up in poor and violent contexts.

The thesis concludes by presenting the empirical, methodological, and theory contributions of the PhD, discusses the limitations of the current work, and considers directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Theory and methods

The present chapter has two sub-sections. The first one provides a review of the psychological literature on the role of the youth group in adolescent development under contextual adversity. I bring together different bodies of evidence, each of them with a different conceptualisation of the youth group. I review literature on risk and protective factors, and studies on gangs and on positive youth development in contexts of disadvantage. Next, the section moves to review approaches to the youth group outside developmental psychology, particularly, those that treat the youth group as a system of shared knowledge, beliefs, and behaviour. The section ends with a summary of the theory frame on which the empirical component of the PhD is based.

The second section of this chapter focuses on methods and research design. The section starts by discussing the linkages between the theoretical assumptions about the youth group and the methodological design of this PhD. Next, it moves on to provide a description of the mixed methods approach employed in this dissertation and concludes with a discussion of the rationale, strengths and limitations of the design and how the methodological design helps to answer the research questions proposed in the PhD.

2.1. The Youth Group

The term peer group is used rather loosely in the literature. The simplest definition is a network of interacting individuals who spend time together and share activities (Steinberg, 2016). Yet, the term is also applied to things as different as the youth's interaction with friends, to cliques, or the entire cohort at school (Brown, 1990). In the sections that follow, I present a review of the evidence on the role of the peer group on adolescent development in contextual disadvantage, contraposing insights from three bodies of evidence: (2.1.1.) ecological, risk, and protective factors research, which views the youth group as a mediator and moderator of developmental outcomes among young people. The section then moves to review research on (2.1.2.) positive youth development and identity development in the youth group and reviews the available evidence on group processes within the youth group, including those known to influence adolescent developmental outcomes.

Thirdly, the section covers (2.1.3.) approaches to the youth group that frame it as communities of practise, cultural communities, and systems of shared meanings. Grounded in these approaches, the section develops a view of the youth group as a system of shared meanings and participation. Lastly, I present (2.1.4) a conclusion bringing together a view of the youth group as a context for development with important bearing on individual level outcomes. The section ends with (2.1.5.) the research questions that guide the empirical component of the PhD.

2.1.1. Ecological and risk-protective factors

Because of its conceptual and empirical emphasis on context, the ecological approach has provided most of what we know about adolescent development in contextual disadvantage. This body of research has informed our understanding of the detrimental impact poverty has on cognitive and behavioural outcomes, and has provided evidence on the risk and protective factors for development in adverse circumstances (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Devenish, Hooley, & Mellor, 2017; Dickerson & Popli, 2016; Eamon, 2001; Fry et al., 2017).

The ecological approach, developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), proposes a view of human development as happening within an ecology with multiple levels that mutually influence each other. These ecologies consist of the micro, meso, exo, and macro systems and are organised concentrically around the individual. The micro-level system entails relations between the developing individual and the immediate setting. Examples include the family, the school, or the peer group. The mesosystem entails interrelations between micro systems at a particular developmental stage. For example, during adolescence the mesosystem may be comprised by the interactions between the school and the peer group. The exosystem is an extension of the mesosystem, and contains social structures that do not necessarily contain or surround the developing individual, but contain his or her immediate settings. The neighbourhood, the city, or the media are examples of structures within the exosystem. Society, history and culture comprise the macro-level ecologies of human development. These ecologies are more removed from the individual, but shape the structures and activities that occur at the concrete level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005). A strength of the ecological approach to study the youth group is that it allows a focus on the relative importance of this micro-ecology in relation to other

systems, via mediation and moderation models. Also, the ecological approach allows to study how larger ecologies (such as the neighbourhood) can influence the types of peer groups that are available in the ecologies of developing individuals.

The peer group is an relevant micro-ecology of adolescent development. Studies focusing on both risk and protective factors consistently find that adolescent friends are similar to one another in normative attitudes (Almeida et al., 2010; Simons-Morton & Farhat, 2010) which is understood to be a result of both, selection and mutual socialisation (Hartup, 1996). Given the dual selection and socialisation effects of the peer group, a sizeable amount of work in contexts of disadvantage has focused on the relationship between risk behaviours and the (deviant) peer group. Studies consistently show that baseline adolescent vulnerability is a risk factor to join deviant groups, which in turn contributes -via deviancy training with friends- to multiple negative outcomes such as substance use, violence, and adult maladjustment (Alleyne & Wood, 2010; Dijkstra, Gest, Lindenberg, Veenstra, & Cillessen, 2012; Dishion, 2000; Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999).

Research on the precursors and developmental consequences of gang membership have also studied selection and socialisation within the peer group in depth (Thornberry & Krohn, 2001; Thornberry et al., 2003). This research has shown a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the peer group, where the latter is shown to contribute to individual level outcomes through a process of enhancement (Thornberry, 1987). That is, gangs recruit or attract adolescents who have shown “a propensity for delinquent behaviour, but once in the gang, the norms and group processes enhance their involvement in delinquency (Thornberry et al., 2003, p. 99). The same enhancement effect has been reported for positive outcomes, as peer groups are found to be highly homogeneous in academic motivation, academic achievement as well as prosocial behaviours (Chen, Chang, & He, 2003; Ellis & Zabatany, 2007; Kinderman, McCollom, & Gibson, 1995; Ryan, 2001).

Overall, this evidence suggests the effect of the youth group on social, school, and psychological adjustment and portray the group as a space of mutual socialisation that can foster positive or negative developmental outcomes, arguably based on shared norm groups and values. Group norms and values in this literature tend to be addressed descriptively. Norms are prosocial if they promote adjustment to school

or family norms, academic achievement, collaboration, reciprocity, empathy, or social responsibility (Chen et al., 2003; Siu et al., 2012) and antisocial if they promote delinquency, aggression, or sectarian violent behaviour (Anderson, Donlan, McDermott, & Zaff, 2015; McKeown & Taylor, 2018). The determinants of the valence of this influence remain unclear and in need of more specification (Brown, 1990).

Research has also focused on the relationship between predictors belonging to different microsystems (for example, antisocial peer group and parental monitoring) on developmental outcomes. Other models investigate the peer group as a mediator or as a moderator between predictors belonging to other microsystems (for example parenting monitoring) or exosystems (for example, neighbourhood poverty) and specific developmental outcomes (i.e. school performance, prosocial behaviour, teenage pregnancy) (Elliott et al., 2006). From these studies, we know that the peer group can be a protective factor. Peer group acceptance moderates the effect of family adversity, where it is found that it protects against externalising behaviours (Criss, Pettit, Bates, Dodge, & Lapp, 2002). In addition, high levels of friendship quality and peer group affiliation attenuate the association between negative parenting and adolescent externalising behaviour (Lansford, Criss, Pettit, Dodge, & Bates, 2003). Importantly, peer relationships are stronger predictors of social skills than family factors, and peer acceptance strongly mediates the relationship between neighbourhood dangerousness and adolescent antisocial behaviour (Criss, Shaw, Moilanen, Hitchings, & Ingoldsby, 2009). Yet, findings also show that the peer group can be a risk factor. We know from research that antisocial peers aggravate the effect of negative parenting styles on externalising behaviours (Lansford et al., 2003).

Overall, these studies show the powerful effect of the peer group on individual developmental outcomes, which would seem to be equal, if not stronger, than the influence of the family during adolescence (Harris, 1995). Yet, these same studies also show that the influence of the peer group can foster or hamper the same developmental outcomes. This puzzle is not engaged in this literature and the argumentation seems circular in that “the negative influence of the peer group is more connected to the involvement in risk behaviours whilst the positive influence

is more connected to protective behaviours” (Tomé, de Matos, Simões, Camacho, & AlvesDiniz, 2012, p. 26). Based on this evidence, the question is not whether the peer group is a positive or negative force in young people’s life, it clearly is both (Brown, 1990). The gap in knowledge emerging from this body of research hangs on the question about how and in what circumstances the peer group will help or harm healthy development.

2.1.2. Evidence from positive youth development and identity research

Research focusing on the inner workings of the peer group approaches it as a social context that, unlike dyadic friendships, “is developed through the collective functioning of members based on group norms and values” (Chen et al., 2003, p. 711). For this reason, one of the unique characteristics of the youth group is that it influences individual attitudes and behaviours through norms based group processes (Cairns & Cairns, 1994; Chen, 2011) that have been identified as predictors of young people’s behaviours, vis a vis family and school norms (Harris, 1995; McKeown & Taylor, 2018; Nesdale & Lawson, 2011).

Research on peer groups and peer cultures approaches the group as cliques (small, relative intimate groups of peers) and crowds (which are larger, reputation-based collectives of similarly stereotyped individuals such as nerds or populars). While the former emphasises analysis based on interactions such as the development of norms, rules, and ways of interacting within the youth group, the later emphasises the role of social categorization on identity development during adolescence (Brown, 1990). Both reveal important processes at work within the youth group. This view of the youth group reveals the tremendous diversity of values and interests that exist among adolescent peer groups.

In contexts of disadvantage, research on the inner workings of the youth group is generally centred around youth organising (civic engagement groups, sports clubs, and so on) and around gangs. Because of a stark division in the literature between adaptive and non-adaptive youth development, these strands of research do not inform each other. This yielded some inconsistencies in the efforts to explain adaptive and non-adaptive behaviours in disadvantaged contexts. For example, sense of belonging has been found to be an outcome of gang membership which in turn

contributes to continued gang engagement (Klein, 2006; Thornberry et al., 2003). It has also been found to be an outcome of civic engagement groups and contribute to positive youth development (Siu et al., 2012).

Evidence on identity development in the youth group comprises another important example. Studies on civic engagement in the context of youth organising show the mores and the practices of the youth group shaping young people's understandings of themselves as engaged citizens (Flanagan, 2003; Flanagan et al., 2011; Kirshner, 2009). At the same time, research on identity development in gangs show the "ganging process" as grounded in shared understandings of what it means to be a successful young person in specific contexts (Baird, 2015, 2017; Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012). This literature evidences the youth group as a rich representational field where young people develop shared understandings of what is desirable in particular local worlds. In turn, these understandings influence developmental outcomes -such as identity- based on group level normative processes (See for example Baird, 2015; Chen et al., 2003; Flanagan, Martinez, & Cumsille, 2011; Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012; Kirshner, 2009; Vigil, 1988, 2016; Wood, 2014) that involve evaluations of righteousness and desirability permeating norms, identity, and relationships in the youth group, yet this value-laden aspect has been left mostly unanalysed, especially from a comparative standpoint.

In-depth accounts of the development of the normative aspect within the youth group are only available in developmental psychology through studies in positive youth development. The Positive Youth Development approach (PYD) is a developmental systems approach focused on youth development in contexts of disadvantage. PYD rejects a deficit approach to adolescent development in contextual disadvantage under the premise that all young people can achieve wellbeing and thrive when internal and contextual assets are aligned. PYD stresses the plasticity of human development and the importance of the youth group as a developmental asset in disadvantaged contexts (Ford & Lerner, 1992; Lerner, 2002, 2004; Lerner et al., 2005). This line of work calls itself developmental contextualism and returns to the core idea in the ecological approach about how development derives from dynamic and systemic (i.e. mutually influential) relations among

multiple levels of organisation, stressing holism and systems analyses as their epistemological foundations (Overton, 2014).

The distinct contribution of PYD is the provision of conceptual tools and empirical evidence on *positive* development, which is defined beyond its previous conceptualisation as simply “absence of negative or risk behaviours”. PYD pays particular attention to community developmental assets, and considers community based youth organising to be a key asset in the ecology of youth (Benson, 1997, 2003). In the context of these youth groups, PYD conceptualises positive development as comprised of five factors: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. Each of these is carefully tied to positive bonds with people and institutions. With this frame, PYD goes full circle with a definition of development that views development as mutually influencing individual <-> context relations. It is only when these relations are mutually beneficial (triggering adaptive developmental regulations) that healthy and positive development occurs (Ford & Lerner, 1992; Lerner et al., 2005).

PYD provides a framework to understand how youth groups, in the context of community organisations, foster development in adverse contexts. It unpacks notions that remain “empty” in previous approaches, such as positive values, which are carefully knit into broader societal understandings of “good”. However, this framing precludes the possibility of non-positive youth groups (for example antisocial peer groups, violent peer groups or gangs) counting as developmental contexts in that the values they promote are considered negative. The normativeness of this approach is addressed in the empirical chapters, in relation to youth group level understandings of violence. For now, it is important to note that the PYD literature provides a definition of positive development beyond the sole “absence of risk”, and appraises youth groups that are more organised, more defined, and with specific goals (Benson, 1997, 2003) which invites comparisons with “non-positive” youth groups with similar organisation and boundary levels, but with opposite norms and values.

Very few developmental studies compare across “positive” and “negative” youth groups (Taylor et al., 2005). Researchers studying gangs have argued that, while comparisons between non-gang involved youths and gang members have increased

over the years allowing to understand the precursors of gang membership, one vital comparison is missing, which is the one concerning how a gang, beyond its defining characteristics, is different from other youth groups (Klein, 2005). Such comparisons require a focus on content (i.e. what do young people understand to be prosocial and antisocial behaviours?), and process (i.e. how are the criteria of righteousness and desirability developed in the context of the group?), ideally from a comparative approach. Such a comparative approach needs to suspend -at least momentarily- its developmental or normative gaze to enable an exploration of content and process in their own right. Because the evaluations of righteousness and desirability are relational and meaning dependent constructs, research that approaches the youth group in these terms is needed. Research combining these elements, however, is not common. Yet some approaches have studied the youth group with a focus on shared meaning-making, interaction, and participation. It is to such literature that we now turn.

2.1.3. Shared meaning-making and participation in the youth group

Efforts to explore the features of interaction based groups such as cliques, gangs, and the like are scarce in developmental psychology (Brown & Klute, 2003; Brown & Larson, 2009). In this section, I review approaches to the youth group that focus on interaction and shared meaning-making. I explore some of the ways these can inform developmental approaches interested in understanding the influence of the peer group on adolescent attitudes and behaviours through the normative influences of the youth group. In putting these different perspectives into dialogue, I attempt to extract conceptual tools that can be used to study group-level peer phenomena in adolescence, which has been a long-neglected topic in developmental studies (Brown & Larson, 2009).

Fine (2012) studies the small group as an essential organiser of social and psychological life. In this approach, the small group is treated as a microstructure sustained by individuals who are not only aware of each other but invested in each other (i.e. cliques, fraternities, work groups, gangs). This approach proposes that the small group can be analysed at three different levels; interactions, structure, and culture, with a focus on shared understandings, co-presence and coordinated behaviour beyond dyadic interactions. Even though Fine studies youth groups such

as baseball teams, chess clubs, and fantasy gaming groups, he is only marginally interested in exploring the relationship between the small group and the developing individual. His interest is ultimately sociological, as the emphasis is put on the tiny group as the cornerstone of social order and societal change. Nevertheless, this analytical approach allows the study of the youth group with a focus on the creation of shared understandings as they progressively build a common framework of interpretation between young people. This common framework of interpretation is called a local context in this literature and the small group is framed as an interactional arena where collaboration emerges and where meanings that are relevant for the youth group are explored and negotiated between its members.

Another take at interaction based groups can be found in the communities of practice approach (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000). This framework is concerned with learning, which is seen primarily as a social process. A community of practice is a social learning system, organised around a shared domain of interest (an area of expertise) where members participate and define with each other what constitutes competence in a given context. This includes any competence, from being a gifted photographer to being a skilled gang member. Taking a gang as an example, individuals in a youth gang may value their collective competence and learn from each other how to survive on the street. This would be considered expertise even though people outside the community of practice may not value or recognize it as one (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). The communities of practice approach emphasises shared practice, shared domain of interest, and considers the effect of group interactions over time. A community of practice will eventually build a shared practice that includes solutions, experiences, tools and stories. The framework is useful to study the youth group because it centres on social learning through interaction, beyond the expert-apprentice dyad, and instead looks at the complex set of relationships between apprentices, journeymen and more advanced apprentices in everyday contexts, where no “formal apprenticeship system” exists.

Finally, Rogoff’s approach to human development (2003b) offers further analytical tools to study the youth group. The core proposition of this approach is that “humans develop through participation in the socio-cultural activities of their cultural

communities, which are themselves changing as a result of such participation” (p.11). A cultural community is defined as a group of people who share practices, values, traditions, ways of doing things, and goals. The definition is sufficiently inclusive to include cultural groups and smaller communities and groups that share the characteristics described above. Rogoff’s approach emphasises meaning and shared understandings as arising from participation in the cultural community’s everyday practices, customary ways of doing things, and through collaboration with others, through teaching and learning, and through goals, which build understandings of what is regarded as good and desirable in the community. In this approach, neither cognition nor context can be studied independently from each other (Rogoff, 1982, 2003a).

This framing allows to study change at different levels; in the personal plane (through participation), in the interpersonal plane (through relationships between individuals), and the community plane (through technologies and institutions) (Rogoff, 1995). This focus on multiple levels has been employed to study the youth group as a cultural community and investigate its role in the development of civic identity (Kirshner, 2008, 2009). The approach is useful because it enables an integrated understanding of development as resulting from change at these different levels (Goodnow, Miller, & Kessel, 1995). An understanding of development as happening at multiple layers understanding of development enables a more nuanced study of the role of the youth group in adolescent development, and how in turn, participation by youths in the group may contribute to its maintenance and change of the cultural community over time.

The approaches described above have in common that they address the youth group as a joint enterprise, held together by interactions between individuals that, over time, will lead to the development of shared understandings, goals, arising through participation and practices. In exploring what is born out of the interactions between young people, these approaches contribute with conceptual tools that can be used to study the youth group as a system of knowledge, beliefs and behaviours organised around a domain of interest. These are developed by means of participation and are available to the members of the interacting youth group. In approaching co-construction and meaning-making as arising through participation, the youth group

becomes an area where young people produce, negotiate and reinterpret shared understandings of the world (Eder & Corsaro, 1999; Fine, 2012). The empirical studies of the PhD rely on this understanding of the youth group but add the element of value-laden understandings to it, with the aim to compare across youth groups.

Previous sections made evident that the process of shared meanings and participation that organise the youth group involve a normative that has been largely neglected. What is missing is a view that addresses the fact that in any group, norms (specific obligatory demands, expectations, and rules) are reflective of values that provide the criteria of desirability or standards of preference (Rokeach, 2000). A view of the youth group as a system of shared meaning-making and participation is an inroad to access these criteria of desirability and standards of preference, because moral goods are dependent premises, metaphors and presuppositions embedded in meanings (Shweder & Jensen, 1995; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1990; Shweder et al., 2003; Shweder & Much, 1991). These meanings provide one of the grounds across which cultural communities can be compared. For this reason, a comparative approach between youth groups in the same -disadvantaged- context (in this research, gangs and civic engagement youth groups) could illuminate key similarities and differences guiding the observed differences in group norms that have been reported in the literature. In-depth descriptions of what is considered valuable and desirable are needed in research studying with young people in poor and violent contexts. Previous literature studying moral development among this population (Posada & Wainryb, 2008; Recchia & Wainryb, 2011; Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2010) has approached the problem without a thorough understanding of how young people assess what is right and desirable in relation to the social world, social relations, and themselves. Without in-depth descriptions of this content, there is a risk of portraying disadvantaged young people as incapable of reaching rational conclusions about what is right and desirable. Further, previous approaches provide no elements to understand variations in these criteria within the same context.

There are very few studies on morality in everyday contexts within the youth group. One study among African American inner city youth focused on the process by which the youth group becomes a community of strong moral rules and norms of behaving in the void of school, family, and neighbourhood as traditionally

conceived (Brice-Heath, 1996). This study shows that in the context of the group, members develop symbol systems to socialise others into a sense of place (i.e. “knowing where to stand”) and that youngsters acquired clear notions of group-made rules that enabled them to think through rule setting and rule breaking in the community. This helped them develop adaptive strategies to the disadvantaged context where they live. Similar findings have been reported by studies focused on youth organising in disadvantaged contexts (Kirshner, 2008, 2009). In line with the approaches discussed before, these studies call for a conceptualisation of the youth group as a context that depends on distributed knowledge, shared skills, common understandings, and common criteria of righteousness and desirability that are sustained between members over time. It is within this framework that the PhD approaches the study of the youth group and its connections with individual-level outcomes.

A few specifications are granted regarding the view of the youth group as a system of shared meanings and participation with a moral component. First, our study of shared meaning-making and participation will be limited to themes that are morally relevant to members of the youth group. In the case of the present research, these themes were group level representations of peace and violence. This approach was required to avoid conflating the youth group to a cultural community in a broader sense (Shweder, 1996b). Culture (in a broader sense) is “a reality lit up by a morally enforceable conceptual scheme comprising values, causal beliefs and practices” (Shweder, 1996b), that provide a worldview through which we understand the world. In contrast, the youth group is a space where cultural norms -those belonging to the existing cultural system- encounter those produced by youths (Chen, 2011; Harris, 1995). While our analytical emphasis is on the shared understandings and participation within the contours of the youth group, we expect that these overlapping “systems of meaning” will shape similarities and differences between groups in the same context.

Therefore, our understanding of the group as a shared system of meanings and participation is applied to group-level understandings of morally relevant themes (i.e. violence and peace) that are elaborated within the youth group and is also useful in the comparison of such contents across youth groups.

2.1.4. Conclusion

Ecological approaches consider the peer group to be an essential ecology of adolescent development. Studies consistently show that teenagers from the same peer group are very similar to one another in normative attitudes, a finding that is attributed to the combined result of self-selection and socialisation (Brown, 1990; Hartup, 1996). The peer group can be a double-edged factor; it can catalyse baseline strengths or aggravate vulnerabilities among adolescents depending on the group's normative framework, hence leading to positive or negative developmental outcomes among adolescents. The peer group has also been studied as it relates to other microsystems, mostly as a mediator or moderator variable between the family or the school and various developmental outcomes. This research shows that the peer group has a considerable effect on individual level outcomes, which would seem to be equal if not stronger than the effect of family-level variables during adolescence. Nevertheless, studies do not adequately inform about the bivalent quality of the peer group, as most of them conclude by connecting the negative influence of the peer group to risk behaviours and the positive influence to protective behaviours.

Developmental studies point to the youth group's unique capacity to influence young people's attitudes and behaviours through group-level normative processes. Approaches to the youth group centred around interactions, shared meaning-making and participation are rarely used to study these normative processes. However, such an approach can reveal the criteria of desirability and standards of preference underlying norms in the youth group and enable the exploration of young people's reflective understandings of them. Doing this involves reframing the youth group as a space where meaning-making, shared understandings, goals, values, and behaviours can be co-constructed by young people.

Therefore, the approach proposed in this research entails a view of the youth group as a space where young people participate and create shared understandings that are value-laden. These criteria of desirability and standards of preference are best explored through content that is morally relevant for the youth group. By doing this, I propose a change in how the youth group is viewed in developmental research,

from an entity capable of influencing individuals to a view of the youth group as comprised by moral and social actors that shape and are shaped by the youth group.

A view of the youth group as a shared system of meanings and participation with an emphasis on morally relevant themes contributes with an approach that enables the study of the process by which the youth group influences the socio-cognitive outcomes of its members pertaining norms, values, relationships and moral evaluations of the social world. The view of the youth group as a cultural community enables comparisons between youth groups in disadvantaged contexts. Comparisons between “positive” and “negative” youth groups can help understand the large individual level differences that are observed in adolescents growing up under contextual adversity.

2.1.5. Research questions

The empirical studies of this PhD were designed to test specific aspects of the youth group as shared system of meanings and participation. As such, the empirical component of this research was designed with three overarching aims in mind; to determine if shared meanings about morally relevant content (in our case, group level understandings of violence and peace) were empirically evident at the level of the youth group. Second, the studies were designed to explore whether shared meanings and participation were linked to socio-cognitive outcomes among members of the youth group (in our case, possible selves, moral reasoning in relation to violence and practical reasoning in relation to violence). And third, to determine whether these outcomes varied by the type of youth group under investigation and by degree of group involvement (in our case, by degree of gang involvement). Each of the three empirical studies addressed specific aspects of these questions as follows:

Study 1:

- Is there a relationship between the group peacebuilding goals and what members consider valuable possible selves?
- How does participation in the group’s peacebuilding activities influence the content of youths’ possible selves?

Study 2:

- Are group-level understandings of violence and moral about violence coherent within the youth group?
- Are the differences in moral reasoning about violence between members of violent and non-violent youth groups related to differences in group level understandings of violence?

Study 3:

- Does the likelihood of self-reported violent behaviour and victimisation increase alongside the degree of gang involvement?
- Does the likelihood of endorsing violence to defend one's honour, respect, group, and self-defence increase among at risk youth with higher degrees of gang involvement?

2.2 Methodological design

In this section, I address the link between the overall methodological approach that informs the design of the studies and the assumptions that guide the approach to the youth group I develop in the thesis. I present the mixed methods strategy I employed and further elaborate on why it is useful to address the thesis research questions. In the last part of this section, I consider the benefits and the limitations of the empirical strategy used in the PhD.

A key assumption in this work is the mutually constituting roles of mind and culture. Empirically, this means assuming that psychological processes and structures are patterned -at least in part- by meanings and practices of communities and cultures. It also entails assuming that meanings are shaped by the subjectivities of individuals comprising these communities or cultures (Miller, 1997; Rogoff, 2003b). In this research, the youth group was taken to be a system of shared meanings that shapes and is shaped by the young people who belong to the group. Accordingly, the methods focused on both, shared meaning-making processes (i.e. shared understandings of peace and violence) and individual level outcomes related to do

with those meanings (possible selves, moral reasoning about violence, and practical reasoning about violence).

A second assumption concerns the value attributed to the subjective experience of the social world conveyed by individuals. In line with the tradition in cultural psychology, I approach the study of individuals as intentional agents, with beliefs, motivations, desires, sense of self, agency, and means-ends reasoning (Bruner, 1990; Shweder, 1995). Accordingly, the methodological tools deployed in this research sought to understand young people's actions and views of the social world by reference to their beliefs, desires, goals, causal attributions, and other important elements of this intentionality. This means that the data used in all three empirical studies focused on young people's reflective understandings instead of measuring behaviour.

Minding the simplification, these data could be classified under the rubric of "self-report". Self-report data is commonly portrayed as unreliable (because of the incongruences between what people say and do) and as creating validity issues in the measurement of developmental outcomes (Austin, Deary, Gibson, McGregor, & Dent, 1998; Fan et al., 2006). However, reducing the value of people's reflective understandings of the social world to its predictive power of behaviour is a simplistic view of the relation between language and behaviour (Bruner, 1990). The methods in this PhD take young people as intentional agents and focus on what they had to say about themselves, the social relations, and the social world. These data are relevant because they are tools to understand the world as much as they are tools to construct it. This is in line with a psychology interested in the relationship between experience and behaviour to which this work aims to contribute.

In this project, I use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. I do this under the conviction that each method is always a partial account of the social reality (Shweder, 1996a) and from an inclination to the pragmatic nature of knowledge and explanation (Cornish & Gillespie, 2009; Miller, 1997). Researchers doing work on adolescent development have identified some of the areas where multiple methods can contribute to our understanding of the youth group. For example, researchers in the field of gang studies have pointed out that researchers in the field are too often trapped in a single method -for example, survey studies

conducted at schools or with police respondents (Esbensen, Winfree, He, & Taylor, 2001). While this is less true of ethnographers working with gangs, the point holds for the benefit of applying different methods to the same phenomenon, as this can lead us to a more comprehensive and interpretable understanding of phenomena (Klein, 2005). Researchers in the area of resilience and positive youth development have highlighted how divergent subjective perceptions can be informative. For instance, Luthar and colleagues (2000) note how ratings of the same phenomenon can vary according to who is rating it (parent, teacher, peer) highlighting that none of these reports captures “the truth” any more than the others. Indeed, these provide a fuller picture of the ecology where the young person is developing.

In accordance to these positions, the methods design of the PhD includes different qualitative methods (participant observation and interviews) and different quantitative methods (close ended-questions and surveys) and combines an interpretive approach with hypothesis testing using statistical analysis. The former is done counting on the integrity yet incompleteness of any one methodological approach (Miller, 1997; Nagel, 1979).

2.2.1. Mixed methods design

The research design of the PhD sought to achieve three things: (a) to study shared meanings and participation in the youth group, (b) to study the link between shared meanings and socio-cognitive outcomes among members of the youth group, and (c) to compare socio-cognitive outcomes by type of group and degree of involvement in the youth group.

Point (a) was studied with a focus on violence and peace sensemaking within the youth group. Peace and violence sensemaking were explored in the first and second empirical studies (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4) as follows: Study 1 focused on a peacebuilding youth group. I conducted participant observation of young people’s participation in peacebuilding activities and qualitative interviews exploring the group’s peacebuilding goals. The two methods were used because I was interested in the link between participation and sensemaking, and in contrasting that what youths did with the meaning they made of it. When seen as a whole, the data obtained through observations and interviews convey the shared understandings of peace that

are found within the youth group. Study 2 focused on violence sensemaking. In this study, I employed qualitative interviews to study group level understandings of violence among members of violent and non-violent groups (peacebuilding groups and gangs). I explored the definitions of violence, its attributed causes, and the strategies youngsters deploy to deal with violence in everyday life.

Point (b) was addressed in all three empirical studies (Chapters 3-5). In study 1 (Chapter 3), I explore the connection between shared understandings of peace and possible selves. More specifically, the study sought to determine whether group level understandings of peace (i.e. peacebuilding goals) and participation in peacebuilding activities were related to the content of young people's possible selves and to their evaluations of what is considered a desirable possible self. The study draws from observations of the youth's participation in peacebuilding activities and interviews about the group's peacebuilding goals and the youth's views of themselves in the future. Study 2 (Chapter 4) explored the link between shared understandings of violence (i.e. group level understandings of violence) and moral reasoning in relation to violence. This was done using interview data on the definition, causal attributions and common sense practices related to violence and close-ended questions tapping moral reasoning about the use of violence with eight different motives. Study 3 (Chapter 5) focused on practical reasoning about violence. This outcome was measured based on the insights about violence sense making obtained in study 2. The study employs a survey to measure the likelihood of endorsement of the use of violence according to different motives.

Point (c) was covered by study 2 and 3 (Chapters 4 and 5). After establishing the connection between group level understandings of violence and moral reasoning, Study 2 takes a comparative approach and looks at the similarities and differences between members of violent and non-violent youth groups (i.e. peacebuilding groups and gangs). The study compares the group level understandings of violence by members of both types of groups and moral reasoning in relation to violence between members of both types of groups. These comparisons were done with the aim to determine whether differences in moral reasoning about violence could be understood in relation to any differences in the group-level understandings of violence. Finally, study 3 was focused on practical reasoning about violence among

at-risk young people. The study takes a comparative approach by contrasting at-risk youth across three levels of gang involvement; non-gang involved youths, gang associates, and gang members. This was done to study whether the results of study 2 could help predict reasoning about violence depending on the level of involvement with a violent group.

Table 2.1: Research design

Research question	Participants	Method	Analysis	Aim
<u>Study 1</u> Is there a relationship between the group peacebuilding goals and what members consider valuable possible selves? How does participation in the group's peacebuilding activities influence the youths' possible selves?	Members of a peacebuilding group (n=31)	Qualitative interviews Participant observation (intermittent over the course of 18 months)	Thematic analysis Thematic analysis	Shared meanings and participation (peacebuilding) (a) Socio-cognitive outcome (possible selves) (b)
<u>Study 2</u> Are group level understandings of violence and moral about violence coherent within the youth group? Are the differences in moral reasoning about violence between members of violent and non-violent youth groups related to differences in group level understandings of violence?	Members of violent (n=34) and non-violent youth groups (n=30)	Qualitative interviews Closed-ended questions about moral reasoning in relation to violence	Thematic analysis Classification of the justifications of the use of violence Chi-square analysis	Shared meanings (violence) (a) Socio-cognitive outcome (moral reasoning) (b). Comparison between violent and non-violent groups (c)
<u>Study 3</u> Does the likelihood of self-reported violent behaviour and victimisation increase alongside the degree of gang involvement? Does the likelihood of endorsing violence to defend one's honour, respect, group, and self-defence increase among at risk-youth with higher degrees of gang involvement?	At risk youths classified by degree of gang involvement (n=370)	Survey	Odds ratios from multivariate logistic regressions	Socio-cognitive outcome (practical reasoning) (b) Comparison across degree of gang involvement (c)

Qualitative and quantitative methods can complement each other in powerful ways. The research design sought to take advantage of this complementarity. The first task

consisted in developing a research strategy sensitive to the socio-cultural context where the research would take place. Doing this involves many aspects of the research design. In this case, I first focused my attention on understanding what meanings and themes were prominent in the local word I intended to study. This entailed drawing from previous research conducted in this context (Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2013), along with a period of informal interviews, and getting acquainted with the youngsters' everyday life in the neighbourhood. As a result of this preparatory work, I decided to focus on the group level understandings of peace and violence as these were salient themes in the youths' descriptions of life in the community and were also evident in how they described the multiple youth groups that existed in the neighbourhood. Young people described the youth groups in two broad categories, those connected to war or violence, a sub-group that included gangs, football gangs, small groups organised around the micro traffic of drugs, and those groups connected to peace, including peacebuilding groups, sports groups, church groups, and music groups. These two topics, violence and peace, became the organising themes of the three empirical studies and the focus of interviews and the survey employed in this research.

The mixed methods allowed the use qualitative data to inform the development of hypotheses to be tested using statistical analyses. Psychology's critique of qualitative work often refers to the lack of comparisons and controls in such work. In turn, qualitative approaches critique the lack of ecological validity of the research conducted by mainstream psychology (Lloyd-Jones, 2003; Sherman & Strang, 2004). The overall design of the PhD sought to address both of these problems by using mixed methods. The first and second studies were qualitative projects, even though study 2 also had a quantitative component. Qualitative findings were used to develop hypotheses about moral reasoning and practical reasoning about violence that were tested using statistical methods. The advantage was the possibility of testing new hypotheses that would not have been formulated in the first place, had the qualitative work not been conducted. These hypotheses were the result of a detailed understanding of the meanings conveyed by the participants about violence and about their practical, day to day reasoning in relation to it. This was done seeking to increase the ecological validity of the hypotheses to be tested. At the same time, the use of statistical methods allowed to run comparisons of two types; a

comparison of moral reasoning by type of youth group (violent and non-violent groups) and a comparison of practical reasoning about violence by degree of gang involvement. The mixed methods strategy enabled the testing of hypotheses with better ecological validity than those formulated in laboratory research, and the study of differential outcomes according to relevant determinants.

Although the main aim of the comparative strategy was to contrast outcomes by type of group and degree of involvement with the youth group, study 2 also compared group-level understandings of violence, which were bundles of significance rather than a specific, measurable outcome. Group level understandings of violence were contrasted between violent and non-violent youth groups. This comparative strategy sought to achieve insights into the dynamics that underlie similarities and differences in the outcome of interest (i.e. moral reasoning about violence) between both types of groups. This focus on process or dynamics is a strength of the qualitative comparison strategy (Worthman, 2016). Research has repeatedly called for more comparisons in gang studies, pointing to the rich literature available on single case studies and ethnographic studies, but the lack of work comparing different youth groups in the same communities. Such comparisons can reveal what sets gangs apart from other youth groups beyond the differences determined by its definitional characteristics (i.e. criminality or street orientation) (Klein, 2005; Rodgers & Jones, 2009). The comparative approach in the methodological design sought to contribute to this question.

It is important to emphasize, from the outset, that given the cross-sectional design, a causal relationship between the outcomes measured in the studies of the PhD and group affiliation cannot be established. Self-selection may drive some youngsters to seek affiliation with gangs and others seek affiliation with peacebuilding groups. Nevertheless, research on gangs suggest an enhancement effect where individuals with violent inclinations join the gang, but these behaviours are enhanced by membership and remain after membership ceases (Thornberry et al., 2003). This means that the gang contributes to violent and deviant behaviour above and beyond self-selection effects (Barnes, Beaver, & Miller, 2010), making the study of youth group membership important in and of itself. Within this framing of the problem, the cross-sectional design of the PhD is well poised to shed light into the enhancement

models, by focusing on meaning-making processes at work in the youth group and their links to individual level outcomes.

Another aspect of the design deserving consideration is the issue of counterfactuals. The studies in the dissertation entailed comparisons by type of youth group (violent and non-violent) and by degree of involvement with the youth group. The first study (Chapter 3) did not entail comparisons as it studied one peacebuilding group. The question arises about what adequate counterfactuals in these studies would be. In the introduction chapter, I stated the importance of research designs that allow comparisons within disadvantaged contexts. Such comparisons allow building upon the large body of evidence comparing middle and low-income youth across various psychological outcomes.

In the case of the three empirical studies, samples of middle-class young people are necessary but not sufficient counterfactuals. Comparisons between low and middle-income young people allow asserting the links between income and specific outcomes but there are differences in the contextual circumstances faced by low and middle income-class young people that matter for the outcomes assessed in this dissertation. For one, we know that young people from different income groups in Colombia differ considerably in their level of exposure to violence (Gordon, 2017; Velez & Dedios-Sanguinetti, in press). Second, the three individual-level socio-cognitive outcomes (moral reasoning about violence, practical reasoning about violence, and possible selves) were analysed considering the content that emerged from the context under study (shared understandings of peace and violence). The question arises about the translatability of the shared understandings of peace and violence across income brackets. Youngsters living in low and high-income brackets in Colombia understand peacebuilding in markedly different ways, and these differences are linked to differential assessments of what needs improvement in the (surrounding) social world (Dedios-Sanguinetti & Velez, in preparation).

The case of disadvantaged young people who do not belong to a youth group are another important counterfactual. Comparisons of this type were run in study 3 (Chapter 5). This comparison was beneficial in that it captured differences by degree of involvement with the youth group. However, it limited the assessment of outcomes dependent on group affiliation such as the willingness to use violence to

defend one's group. In study 2 (Chapter 4), I decided to compare young people belonging to youth groups engaged with the topic of violence (i.e. gangs and peacebuilding groups). The strength of this design was that it allowed the qualitative comparison of shared understandings of violence across types of groups, and the assessment of the links between these shared understandings and individual moral reasoning about violence. However, it was limited in its capacity to discriminate the role of group affiliation in the outcome of interest. An ideal counterfactual would have been the case of youngsters belonging to a "neutral" youth group towards the topics of violence in Chapter 4 and peace in Chapter 3. This would have enabled a fuller understanding of the link between group-level understandings of peace and violence with moral reasoning about violence (Chapter 4) and the evaluations of valuable and desirable possible selves (Chapter 3). In the case of Chapter 3, the inclusion of literature on possible selves among disadvantaged young people who do not belong to a group served as a useful counterfactual.

Certainly, a combination of comparisons between types of youth groups, degree of involvement with it, and non-group affiliated young people provide the best strategy to study the role of the youth group in the socio-cognitive outcomes studied here. This strategy can produce evidence that is compatible with evidence from other contexts. This view guides the future directions of the research presented here (Dedios-Sanguinetti & Velez, in preparation; Velez & Dedios-Sanguinetti, in press).

With these caveats in mind, the use of methods that are sensitive to the context in combination with statistical testing of hypotheses can contribute to the broader enterprise of moving mainstream psychological work towards being a more culturally sensitive field (Miller, 1997). Methods that carefully account for the context enable the development of hypotheses highly attuned to it. In turn, the testing of such hypotheses produce results that are compatible with research being conducted in mainstream psychology (Miller, 2008; Schwartz, 1992). This dialogue between methodologies allows the progressive development of psychological theories that account for phenomena outside WEIRD populations (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010) and improve our understanding of context, culture and mind make each other up.

Chapter 3: The youth group as a space for meaning-making and participation: Empirical connections with the development of the self.

Preface

In this chapter, I present the results of the first study of the PhD. I explore the empirical connection between shared meanings within the group, participation, and future-oriented self-expectations among members of a peacebuilding youth group. In doing this, I test empirically the theoretical connections described in chapter 2, where I proposed the study of the youth group as a system of shared meanings and participation with bearing on individual-level outcomes.

The present study has a qualitative design. I draw from intermittent participant observation throughout 18 months and semi-structured interviews with 31 youngsters who belong to a youth-led peacebuilding group in Barrancabermeja, Colombia. I explore the link between the group's goals (group-level understandings of peace), the enactment of new roles and social positions (participation), and the group members' possible selves (future-oriented expectations). The study employs Rogoff's theory of guided participation and her conceptualisation of groups as cultural communities (1995, 2003b) to study the process by which the youth group may shape the future-self orientation of its members.

The connection between participation in civic engagement youth groups, high career expectations, and higher than expected employment outcomes has been observed in longitudinal studies with young people in disadvantaged contexts. The present study contributes to the current literature by illuminating some aspects of the *process* by which participation in a civic engagement group shapes future-self expectations. The study joints previous work in showing that possible selves are not random but crafted within cultural communities, which frame what is regarded as desirable, valuable and mature by its members.

Dedios and Jovchelovitch co-authored the article that follows. Dedios designed and carried on the study, performed the data analysis, outlined the article, and authored the main draft. Jovchelovitch provided key supervisory assistance, editorial suggestions, and was the secondary author of the paper. Copies of the interview

guide and demographic form can be found in Appendix 1. The thematic codebooks for interview and observation data can be found in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 respectively. The transcript of one qualitative interview (excerpt) can be found in Appendix 4, and fieldnotes (excerpt) can be found in Appendix 5.

Running head: Developing possible selves through guided participation.

**Developing possible selves through guided participation: Evidence from a
peacebuilding youth group in post-conflict Colombia**

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Abstract

The concept of possible selves refers to people's ideas of what they may become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming. This study examines possible selves among underprivileged adolescents who are members of a youth-led peacebuilding organisation in post-conflict Colombia. We draw from qualitative interviews (n=31) and intermittent participant observations throughout 18 months. We use the framework of guided participation as interpretive lenses to investigate whether there is a relationship between the group's peacebuilding goals, youth participation in peacebuilding activities, and the youths' possible selves. A thematic analysis of interviews was combined with observational data of youths' participation in peacebuilding activities. We find that the group's goals of (a) keeping young people outside the cycle of violence and (b) transforming violent ways of relating in the community frame the youths' assessments of what constitutes desirable and undesirable possible selves. In addition, we find that the roles and skills participants deploy when participating in peacebuilding activities are used by them as building blocks to structure their descriptions of possible selves. The implications of youth-led organisations for future-self orientation in contexts of adversity are discussed.

Keywords:

Possible selves, civic engagement, peacebuilding, marginalisation, human development, adolescence

Adolescence is a time when young people begin to establish a sense of the selves they can become. Such representations of the self in the future are called possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and are grounded on youths' sense of self which is shaped by appearance, skills, competencies, and socially shared messages that convey to them whom they may become (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). A core aspect of the concept of possible selves is that these are motivational resources able to trigger self-regulatory, future-oriented behaviour (Oyserman & Markus, 1990; Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004; Schmid, Phelps, & Lerner, 2011).

In this study, we focus on the possible selves of young people growing up in contextual adversity. The study of this issue is not only relevant from theoretical and practice perspectives but a matter of social justice. Marginalised youth often see their ability to realise their full potential diminished not as the result of intrinsic or fixed characteristics but because of systems, settings, and contexts that define much of their challenges and vulnerabilities (Lerner, 2015; Russell, 2016). Young people growing up in disadvantaged contexts confront several layers of difficulty when they take to the task of imagining themselves in the future. In addition to the difficulties posed by economic constraints, they must confront socially contrived messages regarding who disadvantaged young people are, where they belong, and what they can and cannot become (Ferrer-Wreder et al., 2002; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006).

Previous evidence indicates that low-income young people are at risk of having fewer academic and occupational possible selves than their middle-income counterparts. There is also evidence indicating that academic and occupational possible selves among this population tend to be very general and unstructured, a characteristic that decreases their self-regulatory power (Oyserman et al., 2004; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). Comparisons between middle and low-income young people have provided valuable evidence on how contextual disadvantage impacts the development of possible selves, yet these comparisons do not allow to investigate how some young people may achieve positive possible selves despite facing poverty and marginalisation.

Disadvantaged contexts are hardly an even environment; instead, they contain multiple developmental contexts, such as the family, the school and peer groups, which co-exist and interact in complex ways (Deutsch, 2008; Luthar, Cicchetti, &

Becker, 2000). In taking this complexity into account, previous work has identified some determinants of positive educational and occupational future-self expectations among young people growing up in poor, violent, and stigmatised environments. Within this literature, one promising line of inquiry pertains the role of youth organising and civic engagement in positive youth development (Benson, 2003; Geldhof et al., 2014; Lerner, 2004; Lerner et al., 2005). Youth organising allows young people to explore new aspects of their identity, cultivate trust and a sense of agency guided by the group's norms and values, which have bearing on individual behaviour, interactions with others, and the youths' willingness and ability to identify and act on social problems in the community (Brice-Heath, 1996; Flanagan, 2003; Flanagan, Martinez, & Cumsille, 2011; Griffith & Larson, 2016; Kirshner, 2009; Larson, Izenstark, Rodriguez, & Perry, 2016; Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). Recent evidence indicates a longitudinal relationship between youth organising, higher educational expectations, and better occupational outcomes among marginalised youth (Rapa, Diemer, & Bañales, 2018). This longitudinal association suggests that participation in youth organising groups increases young people's expectations of themselves at school in contexts where such expectations are not the norm (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Flanagan et al., 2011; Rojewski & Yang, 1997). Nevertheless, the process by which this may happen is not well understood (Kirshner, 2008, 2009).

In this article, we seek to contribute to filling this gap in knowledge by focusing on the *process* of participation in a peacebuilding group with a focus on interactions (within the youth group and between the youth group and the community), and a focus on *content*. We juxtapose the group's peacebuilding goals and the youths' possible selves to explore whether there is an alignment between the two, as expected from previous research (Kirshner, 2008, 2009), and how this alignment may happen through participation in the youth group. These links have not been fully explored in the past, yet a better understanding of them are necessary to specify the relation between value-laden content (in the form of the group's goals and future-oriented expectations of the self), participation in the youth group, and the development of possible selves by young people in disadvantaged contexts.

Possible selves among at-risk youth

The concept of possible selves refers to people's ideas of what they may become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves are anchored in future-oriented goals and lie at the interface of motivation and self-concept (Oyserman et al., 2004). Possible selves are of three kinds; *hoped for* selves or selves one would like to become, *expected* selves or selves one is more likely to become, and *feared* selves or selves one is afraid of becoming in the future (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). Most of what we know about possible selves comes from research with middle-class populations in the U.S. (Dunkel & Kerpelman, 2006; Wainwright, Nee, & Vrij, 2018). Studies have also been conducted with young people in other cultures and socio-economic contexts. As a whole, the evidence indicates that in order to have a self-regulatory function possible selves need to be "balanced", detailed, and contain strategies to achieve the future-oriented goal.

On the issue of balance, Oyserman and Markus (1990) documented that a balance between expected and feared possible selves (for example, expecting to become a professional but fearing to be unemployed) is a powerful motivational force to try to achieve the expected self. In the case of low-income adolescents, they find that an imbalance between expected and feared possible selves predicts the degree of delinquency. The latter highlights the potential and relevance of fostering countervailing possible selves among disadvantaged youths in the domains where they are more vulnerable such as educational and occupational possible selves. Despite the evidence, the question remains about how low-income youths may develop counterbalancing possible selves. Overall, research with low-income young people emphasises the role of interpersonal and social context influences in shaping possible selves in this population.

Possible selves are an aspect of the self-concept susceptible to influences from the social context (Nurmi, 1991; Zhu & Tse, 2006). The documented finding that disadvantaged youth have lower occupational and educational goals than their middle-income counterparts (Khallad, 2000a; Rojewski & Yang, 1997) has been attributed to various convergent factors of the social context including decreased education and occupational opportunities and lack of economic resources, and also

to discrimination and stereotyping (Hundeide, 2005; Kao, 2000; Massey, Gebhardt, & Garnefski, 2008). Additional studies on this population indicate that disadvantaged young people's feared selves allude to realities they see around them, such as poverty, crime, school failure, and substance use (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). In all, the literature emphasises the negative influence of the social context on the possible selves of disadvantaged young people.

Interpersonal influences on possible selves among low-income young people have also been documented. Possible selves are susceptible to specific others such as peers, parents, and teachers (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006) and can be altered by psychological and educational interventions based on the influence of small groups and role models on possible selves. In a study, researchers were able to induce shifts in educational possible selves by working through interactions in small groups, creating group shared ideas about the connection between the present and future and bringing in adult role models. The intervention improved academic outcomes in low-income youth, and its effect was sustained one year after the intervention (Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002). The influence of role models in the development of possible selves among disadvantaged young people is crucial because they offer highly needed guidance on how to structure a plan to bridge positive future-oriented aspirations and actions to achieve them (Oyserman et al., 2004; Wainwright et al., 2018). In all, this evidence stresses the interpersonal influences as enablers of the development of positive and attainable possible selves among disadvantaged young people. These are also portrayed as counteracting the adverse effect of the broader social context described before.

Previous research has established the relevance of interpersonal influences and social context on possible selves. One limitation of this research is the focus on the positive influence of peers and role models, leaving the question open about the role of "negative" peers or "negative" role models (such as the leader of a gang) in serving the same functions of balancing, structuring, and detailing a plan to attain the desired possible self. The latter introduces the question of value into the concept of possible selves which is a critical, yet less understood dimension. Researchers have proposed possible selves as mediators between values and actual behaviours and see them as critical to understanding gaps between higher achieving and lower

achieving groups of youths (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). By this, they refer to the gap between African-American or Hispanic youths and white youths, and the differences between Asian-American and white youths. However, the focus on differences between ethnic groups conflates ethnicity and socio-economic status and homogenises the values of low-income populations. An important question remains about the variations between young people living in the same context of disadvantage regarding what is considered a valuable possible self.

Significant others, groups of reference, and cultural communities delineate what is considered right and valuable (Brice-Heath, 1996; Rogoff, 2003b; Rogoff et al., 2003; Shweder & Jensen, 1995; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 2003) and therefore can shape what is considered a desirable and undesirable possible self. A focus on how these cultural communities provide parameters that frame the individual's values, ideals, and aspirations can bring new insights into the variations between youths living in the same disadvantaged context. Peer groups are a prime space where all these factors converge. As such, a focus on group level understandings of desirable and valuable possible selves can address some of the limitations in previous research by describing and helping to specify the value-laden dimension of possible selves in low-income contexts.

Youth-led organising as a context for development

Ethnographic research with inner-city youths demonstrates the potential of youth-led organising groups to foster development (Brice-Heath, 1996; Griffith & Larson, 2016; Larson et al., 2016). The role of these groups becomes more prominent in disadvantaged contexts as adversity greatly complicates the role of traditional institutions (i.e. the school, the family) and the work of more capable others (i.e. parents, teachers) who are often dealing themselves with the challenges posed by poverty and marginalisation.

Youth-led organising groups, like other youth development programmes, seek to develop youths' skills, competencies, and frame interactions to navigate adolescence in adaptive ways (Brice-Heath, 1996; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Youth groups, with their dense network of relations, are an interactional field where youth develop and negotiate norms, values, common goals, and shared identities, that contribute to

positive youth development under contextual adversity (Brice-Heath, 1996; Fine, 2012; Flanagan et al., 2011). A critical difference between youth organising and other youth groups is that in the former, youth are encouraged and expected to engage with the broader social sphere, identifying specific social problems and acting on them (Fine, 2012; Flanagan, 2003; Kirshner, 2009). As such, youth organising groups are a context where youths develop the capacity to critically assess structural sources of social inequalities and, by acting on them, produce grassroots forms of civic participation, where they learn to challenge the external constraints and barriers they face and co-construct goals, negotiate strategies to achieve them and carry on collective action (Brice-Heath, 1996; Flanagan et al., 2011; Kirshner, 2009; Rapa et al., 2018).

Recent research has reported a link between youth organising, occupational expectations, and career outcomes among disadvantaged youth. Studies on this topic differentiate between three components of youth organising -also called youth critical consciousness- entailing critical *analysis* of social inequalities, *motivation* to create social change, and taking *action* to reduce social inequalities (Watts et al., 2011). Having the motivation to create social change has been shown to increase occupational attainment (Diemer, 2009). Longitudinal evidence shows an association between actions to reduce social inequalities and higher level of career expectations, which in turn are associated with higher levels of occupational attainment among disadvantaged youth (Rapa et al., 2018). While the role of self-selection effects should not be discounted from these associations, these studies suggest that taking action to reduce social inequalities helps marginalized youth to negotiate social identity threats, and structural barriers, which researchers hypothesise may, in turn, provide young people with useful tools to overcome the constraints on educational and occupational goals.

In summary, research on possible selves shows them shaped by multiple layers of experience pertaining to individual and social influences. While their content is anchored in individual aspirations, expectations, and hopes, they are also shaped by group-specific content such as roles, norms, values and goals (Knox, Funk, Elliott, & Greene-Bush, 2000; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman et al., 2004). Given the longitudinal associations between youth organising, possible selves, and higher

occupational attainment in disadvantaged contexts, the next question is to clarify the process behind these associations. This exercise can benefit from a focus on group-level value-laden evaluations about what is right and desirable. In the next section, we address our approach to explore this question.

Interpretive lens

Our approach is framed by previous work that situates human development in cultural context and emphasises the role of cultural communities of practice in the cognitive and social development of individuals (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2003b; Wenger, 2000). Accordingly, we use the concept of *guided participation* to study youth organising (Rogoff, 2003). We conceptualise youth organising as a cultural practice that is itself a context where development unfolds (Brice-Heath, 1996; Flanagan, 2003; Flanagan et al., 2011; Kirshner, 2008, 2009; Rogoff, 2003b).

The study of *guided participation* allows a focus on two different yet interdependent levels of analysis: the interpersonal and the individual (Rogoff, 1995). The interpersonal level emphasises people's face to face coordination and side-by-side joint participation in culturally valued practices. Therefore, we conceptualise the youth group's goals as a frame for organised, directed activity. The group goals reflect the group's collective understanding of what is right and desirable (Brice-Heath, 1996; Kirshner, 2009) which in the case of our study pertains peace and one's role in building peace. Also, guided participation encompasses interactions where people manage their own and others' roles, while learning or extending their skills through participation in relevant activities (Rogoff, 1995; Rogoff et al., 2003). Therefore, we study the interactions within the group, and those between the group and the community, paying particular attention to the roles youngsters enact through participation in building activities and the skills they deploy to perform such roles.

The individual level of guided participation emphasises individual change through participation in culturally organised activities (Rogoff, 1995, 2003). Therefore, we focus on the links between the youths' possible selves and the interpersonal aspects of guided participation in the group (i.e. skills, roles, and group goals). The study of possible selves is particularly useful for our inquiry, because these depend on the youths' sense of self and skills, but are also known to be tightly connected to

perceived in-group norms and practices as well as to stereotypes, discrimination, and the negative impact of poverty and exclusion on adolescent development (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Oyserman et al., 2004).

In summary, the study's approach allows studying two parallel planes in order to study, descriptively, whether participation in the group's peacebuilding activities contributes to the youth's understandings of their future selves. Specifically, we approach the data with the following questions in mind:

1. Is there a relationship between the group peacebuilding goals and what members consider valuable possible selves?
2. How does participation in the group's peacebuilding activities influence the youths' possible selves?

METHODS

Context: Neighbourhood and city

The study was conducted in Barrancabermeja, Colombia. The city of Barrancabermeja is recognised as a stronghold of popular-class organisation and resistance, which is part of the reason why it was hit hardest by the Colombian political conflict. The violence in the city peaked in the '90s and the early '00s ignited by the right-wing paramilitaries fighting not just guerrilla groups but unions, political parties, student organisations, and church groups -all of which were at the core of the social fabric of the city- resulting in thousands of deaths, disappearances and displacements (Gill, 2016). The data collection for this study took place during Colombia's peace process with the FARC, the biggest guerrilla group in the country. That peace process followed an early demobilisation accord for right-wing paramilitary groups in 2005. Many of the paramilitaries operating in Barrancabermeja or its surroundings remained there upon becoming ex-combatants.

With the achievement of the peace agreement with the FARC in late 2016, the multiple grass-roots, neighbourhood, and student organisations in the city intensified their peacebuilding work with renewed optimism, yet the city was still dealing with violence and homicides fuelled by narco-trafficking. Organised criminal groups

operate in many areas of the city. They follow a paramilitary structure and actively recruit youngsters to join their ranks (Andrades Cardozo, 2008; OIP, 2014). The neighbourhood where the study took place lies in the outskirts of the city and has been identified by governmental agencies as high risk for youth due to the high risk of youth recruitment by criminal organisations (ACR, 2015).

Despite the violence fuelled by the political conflict and the illegal economies, Barrancabermeja has a long and strong history of community organisation (Gill, 2016) and the neighbourhood where this study took place is not the exception. The community's only school exemplifies this history as it was the result of an organising effort by parents and community leaders, who managed to find international cooperation and succeeded in demanding that the city swapped its plans to build a military base in the neighbourhood to build the school instead. Social leaders assure this was an effort to secure an education for the youth in the community, therefore making it harder for narcotraffic organisations to recruit local young people to conduct illicit activities. Most of the youth-group meetings take place at the school, and the NGO's office is only a few blocks away from there.

The youth group:

Young peacebuilders "YPB" is part of a non-governmental humanitarian organisation serving internally displaced individuals in Barrancabermeja, Colombia since the '90s. YPB was founded in 2012 by youths from the neighbourhood and was gradually turned into a youth program with the support of the NGO. YPB was in its 5th year when the fieldwork started and in its 7th year when the fieldwork ended. YPB mission is to "transform social contexts through a non-violent philosophy". The group is open to all youngsters in the neighbourhood, but the vast majority of its members are high school students who want to produce a positive change in their community. The group has approximately 50 members, who meet in groups of 10 for a workshop once a week and do peacebuilding work every Saturday. The weekly meetings focus on training youth as *peacebuilders* which entails life skills, conflict resolution, and leadership skills, citizenship and rights, group discussions about the history of the Colombian political conflict and peace and reconciliation. The peacebuilding work entails the planning and implementation

of workshops with children, workshops with peers, as well as public campaigns against violence in the community.

Participants

Thirty-one participants between the ages of 13 and 20 (mean=16) were interviewed for this study. Participants were high school students ranging from 9th through 12th grade, 45% of the sample were male, and 55% were female. On average, participants had been members of the group for 11 months (range 2 months –4 years).

Youths' motives for joining the group were diverse. Some were recruited by siblings or friends who were part of the group, while others came to know of the group through the public campaigns and decided to join. Some others decided to join to complete the social work hours required by the school. Youths motivations to remain part of the group were more uniform; most participants brought up violence related experiences as the primary driver behind their decision to remain in the group and their willingness to build peace in the community. Violent experiences included violence at home, family members assassinated by paramilitaries or guerrilla groups, siblings and cousins recruited by criminal organisations and friends caught in the drug trade or drug use disorders.

Procedure

Fieldwork was conducted through repeated visits to the site spanning over 18 months between July 2015 and December 2016. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews with group members and participant observations. Verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. The interviewer requested permission to record the interviews, which was granted in all cases. The research was approved by the ethics committee of the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science at the London School of Economics. The study of YPB was part of a larger, multi-site mixed methods study on the socialisation process of violent and non-violent youth.

Semi-structured interview guide

An interview guide was developed based on studies of youth development under contextual adversity (Deutsch, 2008; Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2013) along with pilot interviews, and insights gained from previous research work in the site conducted by the first author of the study (Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2013, 2015). The interviews were conducted face-to-face by the first author who is a native Spanish speaker. Since the interviews were semi-structured, participants were given the opportunity to elaborate on their answers as they wished. Interviews lasted between 30 and 80 minutes, and the average duration was 40 minutes.

The interviews explored the youth's first-person accounts of family life, experiences at school, experiences as members of YPB, including those related to participating in the peacebuilding activities, the use of free time, views on the neighbourhood, experiences of violence and insecurity, and interpersonal relations, role models, views on the future, and views on their future self. In this paper, we focus our attention specifically on the interview data pertaining the youths' views of their future selves and the youths' experiences as members of YPB, including their participation in peacebuilding activities and their elaborations of the group's goals.

Participant observation

The first author of the study carried out intermittent participant observations throughout 18 months. The observation work entailed collecting data of a wide range of youth activities to gain a deeper understanding of the youths' lifeworlds and increase the researcher familiarisation with the youths' daily life. The researcher carried out observations of youths' behaviours and interactions at school, on the street, at church, and during leisure activities on weekends such as football matches and informal group gatherings during the day and in the evening.

Framed by the research question of the present study, in this piece we draw exclusively from observation data on the youth's participation in the peacebuilding activities; specifically during (a) weekly group meetings, (b) workshops with children, (c) workshops with peers, and (d) public campaigns against violence. We employ the observations of interactions between group members (during the weekly

group meetings) and interactions between group members and the community (workshops with children, workshops with peers, and public campaigns). A full list of the observed items can be found in the thematic codebook of observation data (Appendix 3).

Data Analysis

The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis. A hybrid approach was used to develop the coding frame, where themes and sub-themes emerged inductively and were organised deductively based on the theory of guided participation (Rogoff, 1995, 2003b). The final coding frame resulted from an iterative process in which we reviewed the pool of quotes within each theme for conceptual integrity and included new sub-themes as needed throughout the coding process. This was done with the aim to increase the integrity of the analysis.

Observational data captured what youths *did* during the peacebuilding activities. We focused on the roles enacted by youths during peacebuilding activities, and the skills they deployed in order to perform said roles. Interview and observation data were contraposed and contrasted to answer the research question following three steps:

Step 1: We analysed the interview data to identify the youths' formulations of the group's collective goals and the strategies they had to achieve them.

Step 2: We used interview and observation data to study the youths' participation in peacebuilding activities. The observation data was used to analyse the interactions between group members during the planning of peacebuilding activities and the interactions between group and community members during the implementation of said activities, keeping our focus on the roles and skills youths deployed by youths. We contrasted this observation data with interview data on the youth's descriptions of their participation in the peacebuilding activities. By doing this, we could analyse not only what group members did, but the meaning they made of their participation in the peacebuilding activities.

Step 3: Using interview data, we identified the youth's possible selves obtained from the answers to two interview questions: "*What do you want to be when you grow*

up?” and “*What are your fears in relation to the future?*” These questions allowed self-articulated, spontaneously generated possible, specifically hoped for, expected, and feared possible selves (Knox et al., 2000; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman & Markus, 1990). The open format of the questions endured the personal relevance of the reported possible selves (Massey et al., 2008). We contrasted this data with the results obtained in step 2. Finally, we focused on the answers to a third question: “*Who do you want to be when you grow up?*” which described *who*, or *what human being* youngsters wanted to become in the future, therefore allowing the researchers to capture the value-laden dimension in the adolescent’s responses. We contrasted this data with the results obtained in step 1 to see if the responses overlapped with the group goals

FINDINGS

Our results are organised into three sections. First, we describe the youth’s descriptions of the group’s goals and strategies to achieve them. Second, we present the findings on the roles and skills youths deploy through participation in peacebuilding activities, drawing from observation data and on the youths’ first-person perspectives on their participation. The third section focuses on the youth’s descriptions of possible selves and their relation to the group’s goals and the roles and skills deployed by youths during their participation in peacebuilding activities.

Goals of YPB: Towards Peacebuilding

The youths identified two main group goals guiding the peacebuilding activities: *keeping young people outside the cycle of violence* and *transforming violent ways of relating*. The group strategies to achieve these goals rely heavily on engaging directly with people in the community. They reach out to youths who are most at risk of being recruited by illicit groups such as those who use drugs, are homeless, or have associated with a gang. YPB also engage people in the community to “educate and change minds” against the various types of violence they identified in the community.

Keeping young people outside the cycle of violence

Through group discussions, YPB realised that violent groups in their community - such as gangs, football gangs, and groups involved in the micro-trafficking of drugs - actively recruit youth to conduct illegal activities. Confronted with this reality, YPB decided to reach out to youths at risk of joining any of these groups. Central themes in the youths' description of this goal were the concepts of capability and choice. YPB discussions among themselves stressed the group members' capability to resist violent actors in the community in peaceful ways. Their actions entailed, for example, physically occupying the spaces where young people congregate to use or sell drugs. On occasion, and safety permitting, YPB would use these spaces to conduct workshops with peers and public campaigns against violence in the community. At the same time, YPB discussions with youths in the community went a long way to stress that each young person can choose to remain outside the cycle of violence. Accordingly, YPB seeks to educate their peers about their rights and try to recruit them to join YPB. As seen in table 3.1., youths use the ideas of capability and choice as tools to question the taken for granted connection between poverty and youth violence.

Transforming violent ways of relating

YPB identified that violence happens in daily interactions and is a consequence of people's attitudes and socially learned ways of dealing with others. Youths reached this conclusion by engaging in discussions among themselves where they first examined their attitudes toward violence and their past or current violent behaviours. This exercise comprised a process of critically assessing how they relate to other people, how they think such relations should be conducted, and how they think social relations in the community should be. The group implemented activities to encourage discussions and critical thinking of lenient attitudes towards various forms of violence (i.e. gender, class, race, political, interpersonal, and group-based violence) and encourage people in the community to consider behaviours that harm others (i.e. bullying, gender violence, and violence between gangs). They seek to denaturalise the threats, fights, and murders that happen in the community and seek to create a critical mass to push a new consensus about these attitudes and

behaviours being wrong. Table 3.1. shows the goals and strategies of the group along with quotes to illustrate these points.

Table 3.1.: Group’s goals and strategies to attain them

Goals	Strategies	Quotes
Keeping young people outside the cycle of violence	Recruit at-risk youth to join the group	“What we want is to get more youngsters to join our side, and make sure no one else joins the [political] conflict, the war, the drug trade. I think that is what defines our collective, our group” BA08.
	Affirm the youth’s agency to remain outside the cycle of violence	“We had this campaign called ‘I choose not to engage in the war’ and what we sought with it was to show other youngsters, or better, help them realize that they own their time, their ideas, their dreams, that they have the right to choose, because that is an inalienable right, you are free to choose. So we always kept that in mind, and that was the message, that no one can be forced into doing something they don’t want to, they [gangs, illegal groups] cannot force you”. BA09
	Educate peers about their rights.	“We get to the places, the spaces where they are, like the park. We get to work there, re-signify the space, this is a park where people do drugs and gangs meet. They would stare at us, sometimes it almost was as if they wanted to join us, but then they would only come close, take a look and do nothing. They were surprised and curious of course, it was awkward that we were there. We started talking to them. Then, on the day we did a demonstration for peace (in the park), many youths came to see what was going on, and those kids (drug users and gang members) stayed until the very end. And you could see them there, thinking, considering (our message)” BA27
	Physically occupy and recover spaces.	
Transforming violent ways of relating	Promote critical thinking of attitudes and behaviours among people in the community.	“We live in a country where there is a lot of conflict. So I think one should think about what one does in the day to day life. For example, if there is a problem at home, you need to figure out how to solve it peacefully not violently. It is harder because you are personally involved, it is not like a problem that is happening outside, but you need to handle it right, violence has no place in family relations” BA08
	Push for a new consensus against violence	“We first learn basic concepts; for example, what gender violence is, [same with] peace, rights, and how all these are being violated. If you are clear on these concepts, you can pass them on to others who do not know about them, and they will, in turn, spread them on to other people and so forth. This is how you create change and improve things. [you convey] that we should not ride roughshod over ourselves, that we should not always blame the government if we change the individuals first, then change will grow on its own”. BA28
		“We want a world with less poverty and less violence. How do you achieve that? Well, you do activities, you call people’s attention, tell them ‘look, there are youngsters who want peace, who don’t want any more violence’ and then you do the activities, the workshops, you reach out to other youngsters, telling them ‘look, we are a group of young people, we do this and that, we meet on these days, come join us’.” BA15

Together, the group’s peacebuilding goals show youths developing shared understandings of the meaning of peace and how peace should be built in the community. The groups’ peacebuilding goals revolve around two key issues; elaborations of how social relationships are and ought to be (i.e. transforming violent ways of relating), and elaborations pertaining young people’s capability to choose to remain outside the cycle of violence.

Peacebuilding activities: Guided participation to achieve the group's goals

In this section, we draw from observation and interview data to report on the skills and roles youngsters enact when participating in peacebuilding activities. The combination of methods allowed to juxtapose observations of the youths' participation in the peacebuilding activities and the meaning youths made of it.

The group members used the discussions, ideas, and conclusions they reached in their weekly group meetings to design and implement the peacebuilding activities for the community. Activities were explicitly designed to advance the group's goals and entailed workshops with children, workshops with peers, and public campaigns against violence. The peacebuilding activities were typically implemented on weekends and were described by youths as one of the most important aspects of being a peacebuilder. Table 3.2. shows a breakup of the roles and skills we observed youth performing by type of peacebuilding activity, that are discussed in throughout the section. A breakdown of the findings by peacebuilding activity can be found in Appendix 3.

Table 3.2.: Peacebuilding activities, skills, and roles

Activities	Skills	Roles
Weekly group meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listens to others• Respects different points of view• Negotiation• Assertiveness• Perspective taking• Critical thinking• Coordinated action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group leader• Experienced member• Apprentice member• Peacebuilder
Workshops with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listens to others• Respects different points of view• Assertiveness• Critical thinking• Coordinated action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group leader• Experienced member• Apprentice member• Peacebuilder• Teacher
Workshops with peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listens to others• Respects different points of view• Assertiveness• Critical thinking• Coordinated action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group leader• Experienced member• Apprentice member• Spoke person of the group• Peacebuilder• Teacher• Activist
Public campaigns against violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listens to others• Respects different points of view• Assertiveness• Perspective taking• Critical thinking• Coordinated action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group leader• Experienced group member• Apprentice member• Spoke person of the group• Peacebuilder• Teacher• Activist

Dynamics of Guided Participation: Interaction, Roles, and Development of Skills

All four types of peacebuilding activities required youths to deploy skills needed to function like an organised and integrated group. These required the group members to listen to each other's ideas, concerns, and suggestions on how to design and implement the activities. A disposition to listen, the need to express one's point of view and to respect other's points of view were referred to as group norms by members. These norms guided the youths' efforts to improve the previously mentioned skills. The group monitor was the first to manage transgressions to these norms, and other group members would follow by talking to the person involved. Negotiation and perspective taking were two of the skills youths needed to deploy most. Because disagreements on how to carry on the activities were not uncommon, youngsters had to listen to other's point of view but also consider these from the other's perspective and from there, concede some points and defend some others in order to reach a group agreement.

Planning and designing peacebuilding activities had a developmental function in that these increased youth's levels of control of the group, planning capabilities, and responsibility over time. It started structured by the group monitor, who assigned roles and imparted instructions and gradually moved to a co-construction of tasks and goals. The dynamic of the interaction was pedagogical and helped to build skills: the monitor asked youngsters to choose a topic for the activity and guided them in assuring that the idea was implementable, outlining the steps to realise it. At times, youngsters shadowed the monitor preparing for the activities which entailed buying materials, securing permits to use the public space, and contacting the target population through community leaders or school staff.

The monitor gave youths more responsibilities over time, encouraging them to take ownership of the peacebuilding work. During this transition, great care was placed in participation to guide the development of skills and new roles. For example, the monitor guided youths in deploying critical thinking about their ways of relating. This critical appraisal helped group members to identify what they thought was wrong with how people relate to each other and craft a message to be advanced during the peacebuilding activities. As for roles, the monitor would ask two or three group members to take the lead role in the organising of one peacebuilding activity.

A crucial feature of the enactment of new roles was that youngsters would come in and out of them multiple times. Whereas group leaders were in charge of assigning roles and tasks to fellow group members, this leading role rotated between different group members. Everyone can take the lead and have the opportunity to experience the role of group leader while being assisted by those youths who had already performed the role in the past and by the monitor who was always available to help. For many, these new roles required skills they did not always have. However, in coming in and out of these roles repeatedly, youth learned and put into practice the skills needed to perform them. For example, being a group leader required them to respect different points of view, mediate misunderstandings, negotiate agreements, and be capable of assigning tasks while keeping their fellow members accountable. The continuous planning and implementation of peacebuilding activities, the repeated opportunities to come in and out of different roles, and the deployment of skills required by these roles enabled each youth to learn and improve their ability over time.

This dynamic is well understood by the youth themselves who often described their participation in terms of roles; a *teacher* who tells children about their rights, being a *peacebuilder* in front of their peers, or being the *spoke person* of YPB in front of the community. In making sense of their participation in peacebuilding activities, youths are aware and express pride in the skills and roles they gained. Indeed, the repeated enactment of roles and skills over time seemed to positively influence the youths' perceptions of their potential to create social change.

They [YPB] really helped me to be a leader. That is why I decided to go and talk to the regional director here in the city. I wanted to get involved and learn how [the office for cultural affairs] works. It is useful to me because my thing is painting [referring to peace], the arts. I thought I could get myself known there and so I got involved. I got so involved that right now I am the sub-coordinator at the city level. (BA07)

The progressive improvement of skills and roles by individuals also increased the group's sense of coordination and trust in their capacity to carry on peacebuilding activities. This newfound sense of joint agency was evident in the youth's discourses and was described as an asset to achieve the group's goals,

Working as a community, as a collective, is what allows these things [peace building activities] to become more real, or maybe “truer”. It is like this [collective work] has a bigger impact than the change propelled by one single person acting on her own.

Possible Selves

This section focuses on the youths’ responses to three questions; *Who do you want to be in the future? What do you want to be in the future? and what are your fears in relation to the future?* We contrast these responses with the group’s goals and with the process of guided participation in peacebuilding activities. We do this to evaluate whether the content of possible selves overlaps with the group goals, and if so, how this may happen through guided participation.

Desirable and valuable possible selves

The value-laden question on “who” or “what human being” youths wanted to be in the future allowed access to their assessments of valuable and desirable possible selves. Answers revolved around valued character traits; *“I would like to be a trustworthy person, a good human being”* and around valued individual inclinations, *“I want to be someone who works for the community”*. Overall, youngsters value character traits such as reliability, trustworthiness, grit, compassion, and a sense of responsibility towards one’s family, and individual dispositions to improve the community, to maintain non-violent interpersonal relations, and to help those in need. There is high congruency between the positive value assigned by youths to these traits and dispositions with the group’s goals. Both, the group goals and the valued possible selves bring up young people’s capability to peacefully resist violence through actions in their daily life, and ideas related to non-violent interpersonal relationships.

Role models emerged in the youths’ elaborations of possible and desirable selves. Youths draw on examples of past and current group monitors as people who embody these character traits and individual inclinations, describing them as positive role models they want to follow. Youngsters see them as examples of how to live up to the group’s goals of improving both, the lives of young people and the community. These findings talk to the importance of role models and other life stories as platforms for identification and for inspiring what and how one can be and should

be. The guidance provided by the group monitor, who models not just behaviours but values and aspirations, emerged in the data as an important factor in shaping the youth's judgments of what entails a desirable and positive future self,

I want to be like them [group monitors] when I grow up. It is really wonderful to see how people can care so much about others, how they truly care for the problems others may have, that they do not think only of themselves, but think in the common good. I really like that they are like that; many people do not do that. Most people live their lives worried about their own problems, everything is "me", "me" and "me", and they think "If I'm fine, I don't care about the rest". (Interview BA29)

Hoped for possible selves

The question on "what" youths wanted to become in the future triggered plenty of *hoped for* possible selves. One difference between *hoped for* and *expected* possible selves is that the former are elaborated without much consideration of the constraints that may prevent youths from achieving their prospects. The participants of this study face significant economic and social constraints. All participants described hoped for possible selves as finishing high school and becoming a professional, describing themselves as university students obtaining a professional degree. Regardless of the specific degree, all described their future professional work focused on one of two areas; the wellbeing of young people or the improvement of the community.

Throughout my time in the group, I've been thinking about my own way forward. And so now I know what I want to be, whom I want to be and why. I want to be a social worker, which is very close, very close, to what we do here in the group, (which is to) work with young people, context on possible selves is established, so they fare better in life (BA03).

Listed hoped for possible selves relating to the wellbeing of young people included careers such as social worker, psychologist, medical doctor, nurse, and teacher. Participants wanted to focus their professional work on the group's goal of preventing youths from engaging in the cycle of violence and on helping youth "*who like us, start from the very bottom*". Most had structured ideas on how to accomplish this; plans included studying clinical psychology and setting up a drugs rehabilitation centre for youths or becoming a social worker and work on the sustainability of YPB, so that the next generation could join. Participants draw from

some of the roles and skills they deploy in their participation in peacebuilding activities as necessary elements to perform this work. These included the ability to listen to others, assertiveness, and having had the option of teaching and leading other people. They recognised the enabling aspect of having performed these roles and having used these skills in the group.

I had always wanted to help people somehow. But now that I am part of YPB, I can actually do it. Not only that but now I have acquired new knowledge on how to do it. (BA31)

Hoped for possible selves focused on improving the community included engineer, veterinarian, architect, and professional football player. Plans to contribute to the community included, for example, becoming an environmental engineer and help to decontaminate the local river, which is an environmental problem affecting the community. One participant wanted to become a professional football player and set up a charity to help disadvantaged children in the community. Leadership and activist roles, as well as negotiation skills were included in their descriptions of them achieving these goals.

I always say that my dream is to get a university degree. My big dream is to graduate from uni and be an awesome engineer and help people. Maybe give them my knowledge as a gift, I don't know, share my knowledge somehow so to help the community. And also be comfortable economically speaking, I wish everyone would do well in life (BA16).

Expected and Feared possible selves

Several expected possible selves emerged in the context of discussions about the youths' fears about the future, where the overwhelming majority of participants brought in the problem of poverty as the biggest barrier to the realisation of their professional possible selves. It was in response to these constraints that many youths described a "plan b", or second best option that they considered more achievable in the short term. All were technical careers such as mechanic, nurse technician, veterinarian assistant, cook, or running their family's small business. None of the roles and skills used in peacebuilding activities appeared in these descriptions, a finding elaborate upon in the discussion. On top of these expected selves, youngsters described their plans to work and save money to pay for their professional education (or hoped for selves) in the not-so-distant future.

Feared possible selves were shared among many in the group. The common theme was the constant feeling of being “one mistake way” from getting involved in the cycle of violence. Frequently mentioned feared selves included drug seller, drug user, unemployed, thief, and in the case of female participants, prostitution and teenage motherhood.

Personally, I think one is always within an inch of entering that world. I say this because I have gone through very tough periods [of economic difficulties] that made me consider that option [selling drugs]; I did, I considered that option. That is a world that, I mean, it will grab you and swallow you within a second. And [the thing is that] entering that world is terribly easy. (Interview, BA02)

DISCUSSION

In this study, we sought to determine whether there was a relationship between YPB goals, participation in peacebuilding activities, and the group members possible selves. Overall, our findings suggest an alignment between the group’s goals of keeping youths outside the cycle of violence and transforming violent ways of relating and what youths consider a desirable and valuable possible self, as someone who works to improve the lives of young people and the community. Besides, we show that participation in peacebuilding activities affords the enactment of new roles and skills that youth integrate into their representations of who they hope to be in the future. As a whole, our results provide an account of the mutually constituting nature of the cultural community, participation in it, and its importance on individual development (Cole & Packer, 2016; Cole, 2017; Rogoff, 2003b, 2003a).

Cultural communities are the arenas where values, norms, and morals shape and are shaped by individual members (Cole, 2017; Fine, 2012; Rogoff, 2003b). Our findings show that far from providing abstract moral guidelines, group goals guide participation, are implemented in practice, and are integrated as symbolic and practical resources into the youth’s understanding of what constitutes a desirable and valuable future self. The group monitor, through her crucial role as leader, friend, and role model provides guidance and actively shapes the youths’ behaviours, attitudes, and agency; a phenomenon that is largely supported by previous research on this particular topic (Brice-Heath, 1996; Griffith & Larson, 2016; Larson et al., 2016). Our findings contribute to the body of evidence by showing that the group’s

understandings of right and desirable permeate not only present-oriented representations of the self (Brice-Heath, 1996) but future-oriented content in the form of possible selves.

The roles and skills youths use while participating in peacebuilding activities were found to play a relevant and specific role in the youths' possible selves. We find that the skills and roles feed into *hoped for* possible selves rather than into *expected* possible selves. This nuance is surprising and important because young people evaluate possible life-careers inside their own opportunity situation or socio-ecology (Hundeide, 2001) which in the case of marginalised youth includes constraints linked to poverty and stigmatisation. Previous evidence indicates that low-income youth are at risk of having lower academic and occupational possible selves than their middle-income counterparts (Khallad, 2000b; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Rojewski & Yang, 1997). Research on low-income youth who do not participate in civic engagement groups and research on youth involved in criminal activity indicates that *hoped for* possible selves tend to be general and unstructured among these populations (Newberry & Duncan, 2001; Oyserman et al., 2004; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Wainwright et al., 2018). The fact that the peacebuilding skills and roles are used by youth to elaborate *hoped for* possible selves suggest that these may function as developmental assets that help "harder to achieve" possible selves to become psychologically available (Hundeide, 2005). It is important to note, however, that the cross-sectional nature of our study does not allow to rule out a self-selection effect driving higher expectations among young people who decide to join the youth group. We propose that the enactment of roles and skills in the context of the youth group may contribute, to some degree, to the structuring of these future self-expectations.

We suggest that the movement between particular social roles and concomitant psychological orientations (i.e. leader, teacher or peacebuilder) creates a layering up of perspectives within the individual (Gillespie, 2012), expanding the boundaries of the self and its cognitive horizon. While it may be impossible to escape mainstream negative messages about who marginalised youth are, where they belong, and what they can and cannot become, the exposure to new roles allows youngsters the possibility of breaking default expectations of them as "at-risk youth" with no other

future than poverty, marginalisation and criminality. The movement in and out of roles may have the additional benefit of preventing stigmatised identities from getting entrenched (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010) with a group that becomes the source of active resistance to the ascription of negative roles and identities (Fine, 2012).

Our study makes evident the tensions between hoped for, expected, and feared possible selves. These tensions reveal the study participants as being aware of the challenges posed by contextual disadvantage. They also point to a nascent space where group members can start exploring new possibilities supported by hands-on involvement in group activities and guided by the direction offered by the group's values and goals, in what is a clear example of guided participation (Rogoff, 1995). This guidance goes above and beyond than simply encouraging youth to pursue an occupation or career. Instead, guided participation relies on processes of meaningful involvement between people that require the careful integration of guidance, fostering of skills, and the provision of spaces that allow the exploration and enactment of new roles. This process would seem to produce the integration of said activities and skills into the youths' understandings of who they can be in the future.

Previous longitudinal evidence has shown that engagement in collective social action predicts better occupational outcomes among marginalised youth (Rapa et al., 2018). Our study enriches these findings by showing that the enactment of new roles and skills in the context of the youth group feed into the youth's understandings of who they can be in the future. Besides, we show that the group's shared goals align with the youths' *hoped for* possible selves, whose content includes value-laden evaluations about what one should strive to become in life. Overall, the study brings to attention the relevance of shared meaning-making processes within the group and their bearing on individual level outcomes among its members.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

Our study has limitations that grant discussion. The first limitation concerns the need to clarify the role of self-selection in youth organising and whether it, by itself, determines the content of possible selves found by our study. To this end, similar interventions need to be implemented and evaluated with adolescents who would

otherwise not engage in youth organising or who are not interested in collective action to produce social change. In principle, we would expect that guided participation and action in other youth groups would produce possible selves that align with the group's values and goals, but this is an empirical question in need of further research. In addition, research should study possible selves among disadvantaged young people who belong to other types of youth groups, such as gangs. Comparisons between individuals belonging to peacebuilding groups, belonging to gangs, and individuals who do not belong to a youth group are needed to advance our understanding of the specific role of the youth group in informing young people's notions of what is a desirable and valuable possible self.

Second, our sample was comprised of participants belonging to a wide age range. This sampling prevented us from considering in more detail the effect of developmental factors on possible selves and how they may vary in middle versus late adolescence. Future research could sample young people from different adolescence stages for the purposes of comparison. A third important question is the one about the maintenance of the possible selves over time. The integration of skills and roles into young people's hoped for possible selves is a good sign of the potential sustainability over time, however future research using a longitudinal design is needed to evaluate this empirically. The expectation of sustainability, however, is reasonable given previous studies showing a longitudinal relationship between adolescent civic engagement, career expectations, and positive occupational outcomes (Rapa et al., 2018).

Implications for practice

An increasing amount of evidence points to youth organising as a crucial practice for individual and social development in adverse contexts (Flanagan, 2003; Flanagan et al., 2011; Jovchelovitch, 2015; Kirshner, 2008, 2009). This practice requires attention from social and developmental psychology so to understand the mechanisms that can help disadvantaged youth thrive despite adverse circumstances. Such work can inform much-needed policy aimed at reducing inequalities and promoting social justice for disadvantaged youth (Lerner, 2015; Russell, 2016).

Youth organising programmes are unique in that they require young people to engage in collective action aimed at producing social change. Previous research has shown that this hands-on involvement contributes to the development of skills among adolescents (IDB, 2017; NAS, 2002) and that these programmes have a positive impact in the short-term planning horizons when combined with guidance by social partners in the direction offered by group values (Brice-Heath, 1996; Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2013; Rogoff, 2003a; Rogoff et al., 2003). Our study suggests that this mechanism also has an impact on the medium and long term planning horizons of young people. This future-oriented effect of participation often goes unnoticed, as possible selves are not common program indicators. This may constitute a lost opportunity. Youths should be helped to draw a more explicit connection between the *doing* (i.e. acquiring skills and enacting new roles through participation) and the *becoming* (i.e. elaboration of possible selves) in the context of the work with disadvantaged youths. Merely communicating abstract possibilities of future selves may not adequately integrate motivational and behavioural elements to attain the desired outcomes. Instead, a carefully crafted combination of engagement with the social sphere along with participation and guidance in the context of the group may prove a more powerful intervention with adolescents.

Youths are not just the beneficiaries of interventions but are critical agents of change (Daiute, Stern, & Lelutiu-Weinberger, 2003; Kempner, Nielsen, Maingot, Piselli, & Rajagopalan, 2017). The strategies devised by the youths of this study, along with the peacebuilding activities they implement to build peace in their community are innovations that can teach policy-makers and legal interventions alike. Emphasising peer education strategies, promoting engagement with the broader social sphere and designing programmes with just enough adult supervision to provide structure can be useful in developing skills and career aspirations while enabling the free exploration and identification of goals and aims that concern the youths themselves (Rapa et al., 2018). Policies targeting attitude and behavioural change among youths in contexts of adversity have much to gain by building on the experiences, actions and knowledge that youth themselves are creating in these contexts.

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Chapter 4: Connections between the youth group, violence sensemaking and moral reasoning about violence

Preface

This chapter focuses on group-level understandings of violence and moral reasoning about violence within the youth group. Exposure to violence is a matter of course in many contexts of disadvantage. This was the case in the sites where the present study took place, where young people are routinely exposed to violence either as perpetrators, victims, or both. While the effects of violence exposure on developmental outcomes is well documented, only a limited number of studies have focused on how young people exposed to violence make sense of it. Even less is known about how violence sensemaking may shape how young people reason about violence in moral terms.

In this chapter, I explore two aspects of the youth group as it was framed in Chapter 2. First, I explore meaning-making processes of morally relevant themes (i.e. violence) at the level of the youth group. I do so by exploring the group members' definitions of violence, attributed causes, and the strategies they use to deal with violence in everyday life. Second, I study moral reasoning about violence with the aim to determine whether violence sensemaking is linked to moral reasoning about violence among members of the youth group. This second point touches on an old and important problem that remains marginal to research in mainstream psychology, yet it is of cardinal importance: that content (i.e. what people think) shapes process (i.e. how people think). Lastly, I take a comparative approach by studying violence sensemaking and moral reasoning about violence among violent and non-violent youth groups within the same context. I focus on the similarities and differences in violence meaning-making between groups and trace whether these can help explain any differences in moral reasoning about violence between members of both types of groups. The result is a mixed methods, comparative study that focuses on group-level understandings of violence and moral reasoning among youths who belong to violent and non-violent youth groups.

Dedios & Jovchelovitch authored the article that follows. Dedios designed and carried out the study, performed data analysis, outlined the article, and authored the

main drafts, contributing roughly 90% of the content. Jovchelovitch provided key supervisory assistance, editorial suggestions for the article and was the secondary author of the paper. Copies of the study's instruments can be found in Appendix 6. The thematic codebook of this study can be found in Appendix 7.

Is violence ever right?: Moral reasoning among adolescents belonging to violent and non-violent groups in Colombia

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ABSTRACT

We compare group-level understandings of violence and moral reasoning about violence among young people belonging to violent (n=34) and non-violent (n=30) youth groups in two low-income neighbourhoods in Colombia. Drawing from in-depth interviews, we compare group-level definitions of violence, attributed causes, and strategies to handle violence in daily life. Next, we assess between-group differences in moral reasoning in two ways: A qualitative comparison of the youths' justifications of the use of violence and a chi-square analysis to identify between-group differences in the proportion of youths who consider violence to be morally right following 8 motives: self-defence, punishment, reputation, honour, group, revenge, authority, and god's orders. On group-level understandings of violence, we find that both groups define violence as physical and psychological harm done by one individual to another. Violence against the individual is defined as societal when it is tied to factors such as gender or class. Only youths from violent groups expanded the definition of violence to include the notion of groups as entities capable of doing and receiving harm. On moral reasoning, the qualitative comparison shows that both groups draw from the harm avoidance principle to justify violence as moral. Youths from violent groups add unity and equality motives to justify violence as moral. Additionally, we find that a higher proportion of youths from violent groups consider the use of violence to be morally right to defend their reputation ($p=.001$), honour ($p<.001$), and group ($p=.001$). Overall, we find a high congruence between group-level understandings of violence within each type of group and the moral reasoning about violence exhibited their members. The study discusses the link between shared meanings within the youth group and the moral reasoning of its members and considers the implications for violence prevention programs in contexts of disadvantage.

KEYWORDS

Group-level understandings, violence, moral reasoning, adolescence, mixed methods

INTRODUCTION

Understandings of violence, including what it is, what it does, and what causes it can vary considerably across cultures and within societies (Fiske & Rai, 2015; Rodgers & Jones, 2009). Yet, these variations are rarely accounted for in research on moral reasoning about violent behaviour. Research on the topic has focused on mapping and understanding the cognitive enablers of violent behaviour. The moral disengagement framework has proved particularly generative to this endeavour (Bandura, 2002; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). A key assumption in this framework is that harmful behaviour is fundamentally inhumane (and morally wrong) and therefore people need to disengage regulatory self-sanctions in order to commit harmful acts (Bandura, 1999). The latter runs counter to ethnographic and social psychological studies showing that far from being inhumane or universally understood as wrong, violence is enacted and used with instrumental and moral ends across human societies. Research indicates that when all else fails, individuals feel compelled to use violence when culturally elaborated frameworks ruling social relationships have been transgressed. In those instances, violence is used to regulate the disrupted social relation and is understood to be morally justified by both the individual and her cultural community (Fiske & Rai, 2015; Rai & Fiske, 2011).

The analytical disconnection between socially and culturally shaped understandings of violence and individual moral reasoning about violence is a challenge for researchers seeking to theorise and predict violent behaviour generally but is particularly problematic in research with young people living in marginal and impoverished contexts. This disconnection can easily lead to inaccurate conclusions about the moral reasoning capabilities of marginalised young people whose experiences with violence are a fact of daily life, either as victims, perpetrators, or both. A focus on the assumptions, causal attributions, and cause-effect relations youngsters draw from when making sense of violence is needed, as these are at the core of moral evaluations of violent acts and people's reactions to them (Hume, 2007; Larsson & Gill, 2013).

Young people growing up in marginal contexts have complex and diverse understandings of violence that include ideas about the sources, types, and agents of

violence, as well elaborated attributions of its causes (Daiute & Fine, 2003; Johnson, Frattaroli, Wright, Pearson-Fields, & Cheng, 2004; Krause, Torche, Velásquez, & Jaramillo, 2014; Quinn, Bell-Ellison, Loomis, & Tucci, 2007). However, this research stops short of exploring whether and how young people's understandings of violence link to their moral reasoning about violence despite extensive work in cultural psychology showing the deep entanglement of semantic and structural factors in the process of moral reasoning (Jensen, 2011; Miller, Wice, & Goyal, 2018; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 2003). Recent work shows that individuals do not engage in dehumanisation – a prime moral disengagement strategy - when violence is considered to be morally justified (Rai, Valdesolo, & Graham, 2017).

In this study, we take a cultural psychological approach to the study of moral reasoning among disadvantaged youths in two marginalised neighbourhoods in Colombia. Acknowledging the large variation in the meaning attributed to violence within marginalised contexts, we study variations between two types of youth groups; violent and non-violent. We study the group-level understandings of violence and explore their link to individual moral reasoning about violence. We take the understandings of violence to be socially and culturally shaped and approach the youth group as a cultural community (Kirshner, 2008, 2009; Rogoff, 2003). We use a comparative approach to study whether differences in moral reasoning about violence between members of each type of group can be understood in terms of any differences in group-level understandings of violence. In doing so, we seek to contribute to refining our understanding of how socially and culturally shaped understandings of violence connect to individual moral reasoning about it, and highlight the variation in psychological outcomes among young people, despite them living in similarly poor and violent contexts.

BACKGROUND

Understandings of violence among disadvantaged youths

Chronic exposure to urban violence shapes the sense people make of it and the strategies they use to confront it (Auyero & Kilanski, 2015; Villareal, 2015). Understandings of violence by people living in conditions of chronic violence are

richer and more complex than those of the general population. For example, a study on the understandings of violence among Swedish adults and children from the general population found that violence was defined first and foremost as physical harm (Larsson & Gill, 2013). In contrast, research on disadvantaged youths' perspectives reports elaborate descriptions of violence that include notions of physical harm but also psychological harm, including yelling or emotional abuse, and institutional forms of violence such as discrimination and stereotyping (Daiute & Fine, 2003; Quinn et al., 2007).

Urban youths also have complex attributions about the causes of violence. They identify individual-level causes such as impulsivity, alcohol abuse, or stress; family-level causes such as violent households; and community-level causes of violence that include a pre-eminence of negative role models for youth and the lack of positive examples to follow (Johnson et al., 2004). Studies further show that young people identify institutional and societal sources of violence drawing from experiences they have at school or the hands of the police, including stereotyping, stigma, and discrimination towards disadvantaged and minority young people (Daiute & Fine, 2003; Daiute, Stern, & Lelutiu-Weinberger, 2003; Quinn et al., 2007).

Group level understandings of violence

The youth group is an essential aspect of adolescent development (Fine, 2012; Flanagan, Martinez, & Cumsille, 2011; Lerner et al., 2005). It is a space where youths learn to interact with their physical and social environment and a system that provides both behavioural and moral codes (Brice-Heath, 1996; Rodgers & Jones, 2009). The youth group is also a prime representational field, where youth elaborate shared understandings and practices that help them make sense of the world. These organise experience and cognition and become a medium where individuals develop (Fine, 2012; Jovchelovitch, 2007; Wenger, 2000).

Most of what we know about group-level understandings of violence in Latin America – a region with high rates of violence among marginalised young people – comes from ethnographic studies on gangs. This body of research shows how marginalised young men think of and deploy violence strategically for various

purposes including safety, status, intimidation, and control (Krause et al., 2014; Rodgers, 2009; Zubillaga, 2009); and shows the deployment of violence playing a vital role in the construction of identities and masculinities in the context of the gang (Baird, 2015, 2017). Groups may also use violence to defend themselves, to defend their neighbourhood, or to make justice with their own hands as is the case with vigilantes and *porras* groups. Overall, this research emphasises how larger structures of marginalisation and disadvantage shape how violence is enacted, used and represented by young people in these contexts (Baird, 2017; Bourgois, 2003).

Violent youth groups are not the only youth groups to be found in contexts of disadvantage. Research shows that in these contexts, youth groups often organise against the violence they see in the community, as is the case with peacebuilding, civic engagement, or church groups (Amit-Talai & Wulff, 1995). Given the chronic exposure to violence of these youngsters, we would expect that such groups develop shared understandings of violence. There is very little research on the shared understandings of violence among members of non-violent groups. Even less is known about how these shared understandings compare to those in violent youth groups. Studies taking a comparative approach commonly contrast gang members against non-gang members, but the latter group is selected by its non-membership status, yielding a meaningful comparison between significant youth groups impossible. Only a few studies (Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012; Taylor et al., 2005) have compared youths belonging to gangs with civic engagement groups, but these focus on outcomes that are relevant for the violent group only; for example, the outcome is criminal activity.

Overall, this literature highlights complex meanings and uses of violence organised within the contours of the youth group, and portrays violence as having a role in delineating “types” of youth groups. This lays the ground for research on how violence sensemaking within the group may link to the psychological functioning of group members. It is to this issue that we now turn.

Moral reasoning about violence across cultural communities

By definition, understandings of violence pertain to the moral domain. Violence brings about issues of harm, justifications of violent acts, and moral agency about

violence (Bandura, 2002; Decety & Cowell, 2018; Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2013; Edwards, Banyard, Moschella, & Seavey, 2016). Psychological research on moral reasoning about violence has contributed with a detailed understanding of the cognitive enablers of violent behaviour, best known as moral disengagement strategies (Bandura, 1986, 2002; Bandura et al., 1996). In this framework, violent acts are understood to be the result of a dysregulation of cognitive controls (i.e. impulsive violence) or perpetrated wilfully as a means to achieve a goal (i.e. instrumental violence). In both cases, individuals need to override internalised moral standards against harming others by actively disengaging moral self-sanctions through the process of moral disengagement. Eight moral disengagement strategies accomplish different but related functions. The strategies of palliative comparison, euphemistic labelling, and moral justification allow a resignification of the immoral conduct; the strategy of minimising, ignoring, or misconstruing the consequences helps to re-signify the detrimental effect of the harmful action; displacement and diffusion of responsibility are used to distort the link between agent and harm done. Lastly, dehumanisation and attribution of blame achieve a resignification of the victim to enable violent behaviour (Bandura, 2002; Bandura et al., 1996).

A main assumption in the moral disengagement framework is that violence is fundamentally inhumane and therefore, individuals need to disengage moral self-sanctions if they are to harm others. Yet, newest research has integrated evidence from moral psychology and ethnographic work on the meanings of violence to show that moral disengagement strategies are useful in enabling instrumental violence (violence to pursue a goal) but are not needed to enable violence that is experienced by individuals as virtuous or moral (Rai et al., 2017). Violence is experienced as moral when it is used to regulate cultural models of social relations in the cases when they have been transgressed. When people act following morally motivated violence, the person “subjectively feels that what she is doing is right: she believes that she should do the violence and she is moved by moral emotions such as loyalty or outrage” (Fiske & Rai, 2015, p. 5). Four fundamental moral motives can prompt moral violence: unity, proportionality, hierarchy, and equality (Rai & Fiske, 2011). Unity is directed toward carrying for and supporting the wellbeing of one’s group. Hierarchy is directed toward creating and maintaining linear ranking in social groups. Equality is directed toward enforcing even balance and in-kind reciprocity in

social relations. Proportionality is directed toward calculating and acting in accord with ratios or rates among distinct goods, seeking to ensure that rewards or punishments are proportional to contributions, effort, merit or guilt (Fiske & Rai, 2015). The use of violence according to by these moral motives is not instrumental because it does not follow a cost-benefit assessment or instrumental rationality. Instead, it follows a value reasoning, where violence is motivated by commitments to sacred ideas and values that come under threat (Ginges, 2019). In these situations, people will trade security or even their life to defend such values, as when a gang member states that “I would die for my gang”.

As a result, moral disengagement and virtuous violence frameworks offer competing interpretations of morally justified violence. The former sees *moral justification* as a moral disengagement strategy that makes the detrimental conduct “personally and socially acceptable by portraying it in the service of valued social or moral purposes” (Bandura et al., 1996, p. 365). The virtuous violence framework sees the moral justification of violence as a *moral reason* that provides an inroad to understanding cultural mandates regulating social relations in any given context. Research on moral disengagement has shown that gang members are more likely than non-gang involved youths to use moral disengagement strategies to justify violent acts (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). This includes moral justifications of violence in the name of one’s honour and one’s group (Alleyne, Fernandes, & Pritchard, 2014; Bandura et al., 1996, p. 199; Niebieszcanski, Harkins, Judson, Smith, & Dixon, 2015).

Therefore, a young person’s assertion that violence may be righteously used to defend one’s group can be taken as a justification of an action the individual knows deep inside to be morally wrong, or as a reason that is coherent with a moral motive of unity mandating that one defends one’s group integrity and interests (Fiske & Rai, 2015). The reading of the statement as a moral justification or as a moral reason needs grounding in an in-depth understanding of violence sensemaking in particular local worlds and by particular groups of people. After all, determining whether moral motives are behind violent behaviour is essential to understanding it correctly, and to improving the predictions, management, and preventions to be done about it.

This study

Young people growing up in disadvantaged contexts are not passive observers of their surroundings but active agents who engage, enact or resist the violence around them (Daiute & Fine, 2003). The question of how these understandings of violence link to moral reasoning about violence is an important and neglected piece in the problem of youth violence and how it is approached. In this study, we focus on young people belonging to youth groups for which violence is a central topic: gangs and peacebuilding groups. These youth groups are prime representational fields where youth elaborate group-level understandings of violence, as shown by research showing complex meanings and uses of violence in the context of the gang (See Baird, 2017; Rodgers, 2009; Zubillaga, 2009 for some examples). Yet, despite this evidence, previous efforts have not explored the connections between group-level understandings of violence and young people's moral reasoning about it.

We assume the understandings of violence to be socially and culturally shaped and approach the youth group as a cultural community (Kirshner, 2008, 2009; Rogoff, 2003). We set to study whether and how group-level understandings of violence - comprising definitions of violence, attributed causes, and strategies to manage violence in daily life- correspond to individual moral reasoning about violence. Additionally, we take a comparative approach by focusing on young people who belong to violent and non-violent youth groups seeking to explore whether differences in individual-level moral reasoning about violence are consistent with differential group-level understandings of violence. We work with young people who belong to gangs and young people who belong to peacebuilding groups, who also organise around violence or rather the prevention of it. In doing so, we ask:

- Are group-level understandings of violence and individual moral reasoning about violence coherent within the youth group?
- Are the differences in moral reasoning about violence between members of violent and non-violent youth groups related to differences in group-level understandings of violence?

METHODS

Participants and group membership

In this study, we define violent groups as those that “engage in collective violence to achieve their social, economic, or political goals” (Littman, 2018, p. 79). This definition encompasses from insurgent movements to neighbourhood gangs and criminal organisations. Participants in our study belonged to gangs organised around territory, drug micro-traffic (*bandas* and *parches*) or around football teams (*barras*). We define non-violent groups as those that engage in collective action to achieve their social, economic, or political goals, but do not use violence to do so. In our study, members of non-violent groups belonged to three peacebuilding youth groups, organised around the goals of building peaceful relations and peaceful communities. Sixty-four young people between the ages of 13 and 24 (mean=16), belonging to violent (n=34) and non-violent (n=30) youth groups participated in the study. A small number of them (n=5) were found to belong to both types of groups. A decision was made to categorise them as members of violent groups because they spent more time with their gang and talked more about that group than about their peacebuilding group. As described in the next section, a sensitivity analysis was conducted to assure that the categorisation decision did not change the results. Table 4.1 shows the demographic characteristics of the study participants by group membership.

Table 4.1: Participants

	Non-violent groups	Violent groups
Age		
13-15	9	15
16-18	19	15
19-24	2	4
Gender		
Female	13	12
Male	17	22
City		
Barrancabermeja	22	15
Soacha	8	19
Grade		
6th - 8th	1	9
9th - 10th	17	16
11th	12	9
Total	30	34

Study sites

The study was conducted in two locations in Colombia. One was a low-income neighbourhood in the city of Barrancabermeja, in the region of Santander. The second was a low-income neighbourhood in the municipality of Soacha. The study sites were selected because, despite the differences in geographic location and level of urbanisation, they have a similar history of violence and strong community and youth organisations. Both locations have been affected by Colombia's political conflict and the narcotraffic and have been sites of forced displacements, disappearances and extrajudicial killings. Both have seen multiple armed groups competing for the control of their territory; these include guerrilla groups, right-wing paramilitary groups, narco-gangs, and the Colombian army. At present, both sites have high criminality and homicide rates, gang activity and organised criminal bands that specialise in the micro-trafficking of drugs (Cabrera Cabrera & Romero Tunarosa, 2012; CID, 2010; Gill, 2016). Both locations also have well-organised civic society actors, most notably women organisations, victims organisations, and youth organisations led by local people, as well as NGOs that focus their work on the problems affecting these communities, including gender violence, youth gang involvement, and group support for substance use disorders (Cabrera Cabrera & Romero Tunarosa, 2012; Gill, 2016; Haugaard & Nicholls, 2010).

Procedure

In Barrancabermeja, participants were recruited through an NGO and a local school, by the NGO programme monitor and by the school social worker. In Soacha, participants were recruited through the same NGO and its partner local school, and recruitment was done by the school psychologist. These professionals were in the best position to recruit study participants because they were in close contact with the youths, know the youths' individual and family circumstances, and know their life stories. They also have relevant local knowledge of the dynamics of violence, including the practices of youth recruitment by the narcotraffic and gangs in their communities. These professionals identified youngsters who belonged to violent and non-violent groups. A confirmatory screening of group affiliation was done at the beginning of the interview. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, by the first author of this study who is a native Spanish speaker. The interviews lasted an

average of 43 minutes (range 30-75 minutes). The research was approved by the ethics committee of the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Instruments

Demographic form: A short demographic questionnaire was employed to gather data on age, gender, school enrolment, school year, group affiliation, length of group affiliation, work status, and income.

Semi-structured interview guide: An interview guide was developed for this study. The interview focused on the participants' 1) experiences as members of the youth group, 2) perspectives on positive aspects and problems faced by youth in the community, 3) experiences with insecurity and substance use 4) definitions, experiences, and moral reasoning about violence, 5) views on their future, 6) moral values and definitions of peace, and 7) attitudes towards the Colombian peace process, which was ongoing at the time of the interviews.

In this paper, we only focus on the youths' definitions, experiences, and moral reasoning about violence. The interview guide included questions about the definition of violence and its attributed causes, about situations where the participant decided to use violence and the reasons why, and additional questions about the participant involvement in the cycle of violence. The section contained a set of closed-ended questions containing eight motives - self-defence, punishment, reputation, honour, group, revenge, authority, and god's orders –defined by the virtuous violence framework (Fiske, 2000; Fiske & Rai, 2015; Rai & Fiske, 2011). For each one, the participant was asked whether she/he considered the use of violence in connection to that motive to be morally right, and was further prompted to explain the reasoning behind his/her answer. The specific question in each case was “*Do you think it is morally right to use violence to/in...*”. Because these were qualitative interviews, the researcher could do follow up questions to determine whether a positive answer was referring to social conformity or the social convention domain (“it is right because everyone does it”) or if it was referring to moral violence (“it is right to use violence in this situation”). This differentiation is

key to external motivation and internalised moral standards (Miller, Das, & Chakravarthy, 2011; Miller et al., 2018).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis: Interview data was analysed using thematic analysis and focused on two themes; (a) group-level understandings of violence and (b) moral reasoning about violence. The analysis of (a) focused on the definitions of violence, its attributed causes, and strategies to handle violence in daily life. Sub-themes and codes were data-driven, developed in a predominately inductive way with limited guidance from theoretical principles. The analysis of (b) focused on how the youths' justified the use of violence. The themes and sub-themes of this section were developed in a deductive way. In each case, we classified the justification of the use of violence in three mutually exclusive categories capturing three types of violence: impulsive, instrumental, or moral (Rai et al., 2017) as shown in table 4.2 below. Justifications of instrumental violence were classified according to goals emerging from the data. Justifications of moral violence were further classified using the virtuous violence framework, which specifies four moral motives for the use of violence; unity, equality, hierarchy, and proportionality (Fiske & Rai, 2015), and a fifth motive (self-defence) emerging from the data.

Table 4.2: Categorization of justifications for the use of violence

Violence category	Definition	Quote
Impulsive violence	Participant acknowledges using violence is not right but asserts that emotion or rage drove his/her reaction.	<i>"I know it was wrong, but I was really angry".</i>
Instrumental violence	Participant recognises using violence is not right but justifies it as necessary to attain a goal.	<i>"In this case, using violence is not ideal, but sometimes you have to punch them. so they don't disrespect you".</i>
Moral violence	Participant considers the use of violence to be morally right according to one of 5 moral motives: Self-defence, unity, equality, hierarchy, proportionality.	<i>"Of course it is right, if they are violent with my group, I won't take crap from anyone, the group comes first, you've got to react".</i>

Qualitative comparison: Between-group differences

We used the qualitative data to compare groups in three ways. First, we used code frequencies as an indicator of the relative importance or salience of each sub-code within and between group types. Second, we counted the number of participants contributing to each sub-code to obtain an indication of relative consensus within and between group types. Third, we analysed the content of each sub-code to determine the similarities and differences in the meaning each group was conveying.

For example, for the sub-code *group violence* (within the category “definition of violence”) we first identified the code frequency and contrasted it with other sub-codes. This allowed us to identify its relative importance within each group and to compare it between groups. Second, we counted the number of participants that had provided data tagged with “group violence” and contrasted this number within and between groups. Lastly, we identified what participants from each type of group meant by “group violence”, paying attention to the similarities and differences in how they made sense of this concept. The study’s full coding frame containing codes, sub-codes, and quotes for the group-level understandings of violence and moral reasoning about violence be found in Appendix 7.

Statistical comparison: Between-group differences

We conducted a chi-square analysis to test for differences in the proportion of participants from each type of group that considered the use of violence to be morally right for 8 motives: self-defence, punishment, reputation, honour, group, revenge, authority, and god’s orders. This was done to run an additional comparison between groups, one that would identify statistically significant differences in the reasoning about moral violence between members of both types of groups.

FINDINGS

Group level understandings of violence

Group-level understandings of violence entailed the youths’ definition of violence, causal attributions about the causes of violence, and the strategies they deploy to deal with violence in everyday life. In this section, we describe group-level

understandings of violence with a focus on the similarities and differences across violent and non-violent groups. Table 4.3 below shows the code frequencies and the number of participants (in parenthesis) for group-level understandings of violence.

Table 4.3.: Group level understandings of violence

	Non-violent groups (N=30)	Violent groups (N=34)
Definition of violence		
Interpersonal violence	146 (29)	148 (33)
Group violence	2 (2)	76 (25)
Societal violence	61 (23)	56 (20)
Causes of violence		
Interpersonal causes	46 (22)	78 (28)
Group causes	10 (9)	94 (30)
Societal causes	48 (22)	52 (26)
Drugs and alcohol	65 (30)	108 (33)
Strategies to deal w/ violence		
Get along w/ violent people	5 (2)	18 (11)
Keep family out of gang trouble	0 (0)	18 (7)
Violence only when warranted	7 (7)	24 (15)

* Each cell shows the code frequency and the number of participants contributing to each code in parenthesis.

Definition of violence

Members of violent and non-violent groups defined violence as “harming an individual”. This understanding of harming entails physical harm (i.e. hit, rape, or kill someone, but also cutting their hair or twisting their arm) and psychological harm (i.e. making someone feel fearful, unsafe, or undervalued). This dual elaboration of harming as physical and psychological is consistent with previous research on adolescent perceptions of violence in urban contexts (Quinn et al., 2007). Participants from both types of groups defined violence as societal. This violence results from societal patterns of conduct that harm individuals. Members of both types of groups mentioned gender violence, political violence, and violence related to crime and the drug trade. Members of non-violent groups further included class and ethnic discrimination in their definitions of societal violence, consistent with previous research on the topic (Daiute & Fine, 2003). Members of violent groups added child abuse, forced labour, as well as governmental negligence and apathy for poor people as forms of societal violence. Overall, we find a complex definition of violence among participants that includes physical and psychological

harm produced by individual agents acting on their own or guided by larger societal structures capable of producing harm. This reveals an understanding of violence that includes individual and societal dimensions, and the idea that agents of violence can act following societal patterns in addition to individual motivations.

Notably, an unexpected difference emerged in the definition of violence across both types of group. Members of violent groups defined violence as the harm done by groups to other groups. This harm could be physical (fighting, hurting, killing members of other groups) or symbolic (insulting or mocking members of other groups, stealing valued objects or territory). Youngsters referred to rival groups fighting each other (i.e. gangs, cliques from different schools, or families against other families), but also described how a group could harm a rival group's member by attacking an alternate group to which him/her is affiliated. An example of this would be a gang attacking the family of a rival gang member in order to harm him/her. The notion of groups as agents and victims of violence was mostly absent from the definitions offered by members of non-violent groups. Only two participants referred to it, in contrast to 25 members of violent groups (see table 4.3 above).

The view of groups as agents and victims of violence is best understood as an expression collective violence anchored in social identity processes, as these two are mutually catalysing processes (Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012; Littman, 2018; Littman & Paluck, 2015). However, the description of how a group would attack a non-rival, alternate group (for example, a gang attacking a family) to harm a rival group member is novel and important, as it reveals two things: first, it suggests an expanded definition of violence that includes not only individuals but groups as entities capable of exerting and receiving harm and second, it uncovers implicit assumptions on the boundaries around the territory of the self (Shweder et al., 2003). For members of violent groups, the territory of the self is extended to the group, not only the one that is salient in a situation of intergroup conflict (for example, the gang) but to other groups to which the individual is a member of.

Attributed causes of violence

In line with research on causal attributions of violence by inner-city youths (Johnson et al., 2004), all participants situated the causes of violence at multiple levels, including interpersonal, group, and societal. Youngsters from both groups identified violent impulses and trauma as potential causes of violent behaviour. They also raised the idea that people learn to be violent from other people: members of non-violent groups stated that children might learn from violent family members (Johnson et al., 2004), while members from both groups said that adolescents might be taught the “rules of the street” by peers. Adults may adopt the “tactics” employed by the armed groups that exist in the community such as guerrillas or drug trafficking groups and use them against other people. These attributions hang on the idea that violent behaviour is learned in society, either vicariously or through interactions that teach individuals the “rules” of violence, be these those of the street or those of war.

All youngsters understood interpersonal violence to be instigated by rudeness and offences such as insults or yelling. Members of non-violent groups added the lack of respect for differing points of view as causes of interpersonal violence while members of violent groups cited the transgression of hierarchies in the neighbourhood and transgressions of traditional gender roles in romantic relationships as causes of interpersonal violence. They also referred to the unwritten rule of “he who does it, pays for it” as a principle guiding interpersonal violence. These responses make evident the differing criteria used by members of the two types of groups when they determine what constitutes a transgression that causes violence. For the members of non-violent groups, these were centred around transgressions to the autonomy of people (for example, disrespect for one’s point of view). Members of violent groups brought up the transgressions of hierarchies in social relations (i.e. power asymmetries between men and women and between people in the neighbourhood) as justifiable causes of violence (Rai & Fiske, 2011).

On the causes of group-level violence, members of both types of groups described rivalry, retaliation, and territorial control as main triggers of violence between gangs, football gangs, and drug-dealing groups. Members of non-violent groups recognised these as triggers of violence, but their statements were descriptive of the

behaviour of violent others rather than normative. These were framed in terms of ‘they’, denoting understanding but disagreement with the fact that these would trigger violence. As shown in table 4.3., only nine youths brought up causes of violence at the group-level, rarely referring to them more than once (code frequency= 10). In contrast, the large majority of members of violent groups (n=30) described in detail the causes of group violence (code frequency=94). They explained that an offence against a group member provokes retaliation against the aggressor because it equals an offence to the group as a whole “*lo que es con uno es con todos*”. Blame, guilt, and shame were described as transferable within the group in the same way harm was. For example, youths explained that one might endure retaliatory violence caused by a transgression made by a member of one’s group. Members of non-violent groups recognised this transferability but again referred to it in descriptive rather than normative terms.

Attributions of societal violence were very similar across members of both types of groups and included violence resulting from the narcotraffic, from the political conflict, from violent groups such as street and football gangs, and abuses from institutions such as the police and the military. Micro-trafficking groups were identified as main agents causing violence in the community because they fight for territory, recruit youngsters to sell and use drugs and get them involved in the cycle of violence. Drugs and alcohol use were defined as societal factors but were described as having a dual cause-effect status concerning violence. Drugs and alcohol catalyse violent behaviour by the user or group of users. Alcohol may catalyse violence in bars and also in the household. Drugs may move consumers to steal to buy drugs, causing societal violence. Drug use can also be a consequence of violence. The trauma caused by sexual violence and maltreatment at home can lead young people to use substances.

Overall, these results show convergences and significant divergences on the youths’ causal attributions of violence. Members of both types of groups converge in saying that violence is learned socially and that its causes are rooted in individual, group, and societal dynamics. Yet, there are different criteria guiding what is recognised as a *legitimate* cause of violence. This difference becomes evident in the attributions of group-level violence, where only members of violent groups consider an attack on a

member of the group as an offence affecting and involving all group members. Also, the idea of transferability of harm, blame, guilt and shame within the group as a cause of violence is understood by all youths but only endorsed by members of violent groups.

Strategies to deal with violence

In discussing the violence around them, youths from both types of groups relied on two core assumptions: One of asymmetric reciprocity to negative acts (Keysar, Converse, Wang, & Epley, 2008) exemplified by the principle “violence always brings about greater violence” and one about the baseline inclination of people to react aggressively, by observing that “the smallest thing can spark violence”. It was in these discussions that youths revealed some of the strategies they employ to deal with violence in everyday life. We call these “strategies” as they were described as things everyone does or should do to navigate the violent context (Auyero & Kilanski, 2015; Johnson et al., 2004; Villareal, 2015). Members of violent groups cited these more often and described them in more depth, which is to be expected given their higher involvement with violence. Three practices were identified: using violence only when warranted, getting along with violent people, and keep your family out of gang trouble.

Using violence only when warranted is coherent with the assumption that a violent act will be retributed asymmetrically, with more intensity than the initial aggression, and with the assumption that people, in general, are quick to react violently. Members of violent groups described the usefulness of carving out a threatening image to deter confrontations and judged the use of unwarranted violence as wrong and childish. It is wrong because by exposing yourself, you are exposing your whole group by potentially forcing them to engage in a fight to defend you.

Getting along with violent people was another strategy, as reported elsewhere (Johnson et al., 2004). Rather than ostracising or antagonising people like drug dealers, guerrilla or paramilitary members, one should keep a safe but friendly distance from them, know who they are, and avoid confronting their status or rules in public. As one youngster explained, “If they are mean people, it’s better to have them as friends, not enemies”. In the case of youths from violent groups, this

closeness serves the added purpose of assuring protection against thieves and gangs from other neighbourhoods. Keeping your family, particularly your mother, out of gang trouble was cited only by members of violent groups. Because their awareness of blame being transferable within the group, they were wary of getting their families involved in retaliatory gang violence targeted at themselves. Violence against one's family is a serious offence that requires retaliation.

Moral reasoning in relation to violence

This section focuses on the youths' moral reasoning in relation to violence, qualitatively comparing the youths' justifications of the use of violence. We use data about justifications of their own use of violence and justifications of the use of violence according to eight motives: self-defence, honour, respect, group, punishment, authority, God's orders, and revenge. Each justification was classified as impulsive, instrumental, or moral following the criteria described in the methods section. Results are shown in table 4.4., below. The quantitative comparison entailed testing for significant differences in the proportion of members of each group that considered the use of violence to be morally right (moral violence) according to each of the 8 motives. These results are described in the next section.

Table 4.4.: Justification for the use of violence by type of violence (code frequency)

	Non-violent groups (N=30)	Violent groups (N=34)
Impulsive violence	24 (16)	19 (14)
Instrumental violence		
Deterrence	16 (10)	38 (20)
Be feared	2 (1)	12 (5)
Punishment	5 (5)	7 (4)
Baddest	0 (0)	8 (2)
Moral violence		
Self-defence	29 (23)	38 (26)
Unity	14 (7)	89 (30)
Equality	12 (7)	32 (22)
Hierarchy	6 (4)	12 (7)
Proportionality	2 (2)	1 (1)

Justifications for the use of violence: Impulsive, instrumental, and moral violence

An equivalent number of participants in each group justified the use of violence with impulsiveness. Research has shown that youths' belonging to violent groups, particularly gang members, are more impulsive than non-gang involved youths (Dmitrieva, Gibson, Steinberg, Piquero, & Fagan, 2014; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). Our findings reveal no large differences in the subjective experience of acting violently in an impulsive manner. In contrast, justifications portraying violence as instrumental were more frequent among members of violent groups (see table 4.4.). This is congruent with research showing that gang members deploy violence strategically, as a means to achieve various goals. In our sample, violence was most frequently used as a deterrence tool, to discourage violent or disrespectful behaviours by others. Roughly two-thirds of those from violent groups and one-third of those from non-violent groups used violence in this way. A few youngsters used violence to instil fear, which worked to control others and assure respect by the gang and by others in the neighbourhood. Violence was also used to punish disobedience within the group and to be perceived as someone willing to do anything for the gang, fearless and the "baddest" (*el más duro*) (Baird, 2017).

Overall, justifications portraying the use of violence as moral were more frequent among members of violent groups (see table 4.4). However, the similarities between groups were as telling as the differences between them. Both, members of violent and non-violent groups defended the morality of violence in self-defence, this is, to prevent physical harm against oneself or one's family members. This reflects an understanding by all youths that harm to the self is a serious moral transgression; therefore harming in self-defence is righteous.

Members of violent groups draw from two additional moral motives to classify violence as moral: unity and equality. The unity motive is directed towards "caring for and supporting the integrity of in-groups through a sense of collective responsibility and common fate" (Rai & Fiske, 2011, p. 61). Members of violent groups (n=30, code frequency=89, table 4.4.) convey a sense of moral obligation to defend their group and take care of fellow group members, particularly those who are young or inexperienced. This view is highly congruent with the group-level understandings of violence by members of violent groups, in particular with the idea

of groups as entities capable of harming and being harmed, and the transferability of guilt, harm, and blame within the group.

Members of violent groups also defended the morality of violence to pursue eye for an eye forms of punishment or revenge ($n=22$, code frequency=32, table 4.4), which falls under the equality moral motive (Rai & Fiske, 2011). This is coherent with the group-level understandings of violence that entailed the notion of retribution under the principle of “he who does it pays for it”. Youths considered that retributions and punishments ought to be administered by those involved instead of a third party such as the police or the judicial system. This echoes findings on the notion of justice in honour cultures (Leung & Cohen, 2011; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996), where wrongdoings are to be solved between the offender and the victim (Sommers, 2018).

Between-group differences in moral violence

As a last step, we tested for differences in the proportion of youths in each group considering violence to be morally right according to 8 motives: self-defence, punishment, reputation, honour, group, revenge, authority, and god’s orders. The endorsement of the morality of violence in self-defence emerges as a key common ground between violent and non-violent groups. The vast majority of participants of violent (82%) and non-violent groups (77%) considered violence in self-defence to be morally right ($\chi^2 [1, N=64] = 0.32, p=.57$). The chi-square analysis showed statistically significant differences between groups in the morality of violence. We find that a higher proportion of members of violent groups consider the use of violence to be morally right to defend their honour ($\chi^2 [1, N=64] = 16.50, p< .001$), their reputation, ($\chi^2 [1, N=64] = 11.36, p= .001$) and their group ($\chi^2 [1, N=64] = 11.87, p= .001$).

DISCUSSION

In this study, we sought to determine whether group-level understandings of violence and moral reasoning about violence were coherent within two types of youth groups; violent and non-violent. We found that they are. Members of non-violent groups understand violence in individualistic terms and describe individuals who can be harmed by other individuals acting on their own motivations or guided

by broader societal patterns of behaviour that foster violence. They have complex attributions of interpersonal and societal violence, and while they describe causes of violence between groups (such as gangs), they do not see them as legitimate causes of violence. This corresponds with the youths' moral reasoning about violence; the only legitimate moral motive to use violence is in self-defence. Group-level understandings of violence by members of violent groups were similar to those of non-violent groups with some important differences. These youths provided a broader definition of violence that included individuals and groups as agents and victims of violence. This qualitative difference was made evident again in the causal attributions of violence. Youths considered any offence to any significant group (the gang, but also the family) as legitimate causes of violence between groups and endorsed the idea of transferability of blame, guilt or shame between group members. As was the case for the members of non-violent groups, the group-level understandings of violence of violent groups corresponded to the youths' moral reasoning about violence. They considered violence to be morally right to defend one's group, honour, and reputation. These results show a tight relationship between group-level understandings of violence and moral reasoning about violence within violent and non-violent youth groups.

We sought to explore whether group-level understandings of violence provide insights to understand the differences in moral reasoning between members of violent and non-violent groups. We find that they can. Together, our results suggest a common moral domain centred around the self that substantiates the morality of violence used in self-defence. Our results also reveal relational and collective concerns among members of violent groups, mandated by the moral motives of unity and equality (Fiske & Rai, 2015; Rai & Fiske, 2011). These moral motives support the morality of violence to defend one's group, honour, and reputation.

The consistency between group-level understandings of violence and individual moral reasoning about violence is significant because it shows that the shared understandings of violence young people develop in the context of the youth group matter for how they reason morally about harmful behaviour. Definitions of violence (for example, "groups can be victims of violence") are integrated with moral motives (for example, unity) that determine the use of violence to regulate social

relations that have been transgressed (for example, violence to defend one's group welfare when it has been attacked or disrespected). These results call for a more nuanced approach to the study of moral reasoning about violence among young people who are exposed to chronic violence in general, and that of members of violent groups in particular. Studies have reported that gang members are more likely than non-gang involved youths to morally disengage from their violent actions (Alleyne & Wood, 2010; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005; Niebieszczanski et al., 2015). Moral justification, in particular, had produced contradictory results, with some studies showing that gang members are more likely to use moral justification than non-gang involved youths (Alleyne et al., 2014; Niebieszczanski et al., 2015), and others showing no differences to this respect (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). By linking moral reasoning to the youths' understandings of violence, our results demonstrate that the righteous or moral use of violence to defend group, honour, and respect are not a justification (a cognitive trick to morally disengage from one's violent acts), but a reason that is anchored in a meaning of violence and in an interpretation of the social world that includes both, individuals and groups as moral entities.

Our results do not suggest in any way that gang members are less violent than non-gang involved youths or that they do not employ moral disengagement strategies. Our results along with previous evidence on the subject show that gang members use violence instrumentally, as a tool to control others, instil fear, and gain status, and also that they act violently as result of impulse. However, our results show the need to treat the violence used by these youths to defend honour, group, and respect as moral violence. Evidence taking into account the difference between instrumental and moral violence has shown that dehumanisation -a moral disengagement mechanism- works as expected by enabling instrumental violence but is not triggered to prevent moral violence. When people harm others on the premise that violence is righteously used, no such cognitive strategies are needed to enable harmful behaviour (Rai et al., 2017). If violence is moral, this implies that the exercise of violence is agentic, resulting from internalised moral principles rather than from social conformity. This has implications for violence prevention efforts, as current programmes with gang-involved youths successfully target impulsive and instrumental violence (Heller et al., 2015), but rarely address the portion of violence that results from evaluations about the moral use of violence. The translation

between moral reasoning and violent behaviour is not straightforward. Even though the regulation of violent behaviour involves much more than moral reasoning (Bandura et al., 1996), no account of violent behaviour is complete without a thorough consideration of moral reasoning (Hart & Killen, 1995). Given new evidence that instrumental and moral violence have somewhat different mechanisms (Ginges, 2019; Rai et al., 2017), violence prediction and prevention efforts should take into account this difference and consider the variations in group-level understanding of violence in their work.

The present study has limitations that should be taken into account. The cross-sectional design of the study does not allow to determine whether moral reasoning about violence is a function of self-selection into violent or non-violent groups. Future studies should employ randomised and longitudinal designs to help address this question. Based on previous research, we would expect that self-selection plays a role in selecting young people by their level of inclination to violent behaviour to a type of youth group, but we also expect the youth group to be a space where individual characteristics are enhanced (Barnes, Beaver, & Miller, 2010; Brown, 1990; Thornberry, 1987). Another closely related and equally important issue is the need to study whether the level of endorsement of violence to defend one's honour, group, and respect is related in any way to the degree of involvement with gangs or peacebuilding groups. Knowing this would help to determine whether moral reasoning about violence is a function of self-selection into violent or non-violent groups or whether it is the result of socialisation within the group.

Another limitation of the study was the age range we sampled. We recruited participants between 13 and 24 years of age but did not analyse how age may impact moral reasoning in relation to violence. As a result, we cannot know if younger and older participants differ systematically in their moral reasoning about violence. In regards to the subgroup of participants belonging to violent groups, previous research with adult football gangs and ex-combatants show a link between collective violence and social identity (Guilianotti, Booney, & Hepworth, 2013; Littman, 2018). Research with adults who engage in political violence indicates that people understand their harmful actions to be serving a moral good (Ginges, 2019). More research is needed to disentangle the relationship between violence, the unity moral

motive, and group identity. Yet in terms of developmental specificity, the body of evidence provides some ground to assert that violence to defend one's group is experienced as moral by young and adult individuals who belong to violent groups. Future research should focus on tracing moral reasoning in relation to the unity motive, as we know that moral reasoning changes through the life-stages (Jensen, 2011)

Future research should explore further the connection between moral reasoning about violence and violent conduct. Our findings allow to hypothesize differential mechanisms for violence enacted to defend honour, group, and respect from instrumental forms of violence. Given previous evidence suggesting that moral disengagement strategies such as dehumanisation increase instrumental but not moral violence (Rai et al., 2017), it would be necessary to study whether moral disengagement strategies are deployed by members of violent groups when using violence related to honour, respect, and group. Doing this would allow exploring whether this violence is processed cognitively as moral or instrumental violence by members of violent groups.

In summary, our study finds a high congruence between group-level understandings of violence within each type of youth group and the moral reasoning about violence exhibited by members. Further, youths belonging to violent and non-violent youth groups differed in their assessments of what is considered moral violence. While all youths see the use of violence in self-defence as righteous, we find an expanded moral domain among members of violent groups that includes collective concerns shaped by the moral motives of unity and equality (Fiske & Rai, 2015; Rai & Fiske, 2011), turning violence moral when used to defend one's group, honour, and reputation. The study shows the relevance of shared meanings within the youth group and underscores the entanglement between content (meanings of violence) and process (moral reasoning about it) in development. Lastly, our study reveals how a focus on the richness and diversity of meanings of violence in the context of the youth group can contribute to understanding the variations in individual developmental outcomes in contexts of disadvantage.

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Chapter 5: Measuring practical reasoning about violence by degree of involvement with the youth group

Preface

This chapter focuses on practical reasoning about violence among a sample of at-risk youths in Bogotá, Colombia. Based on the findings on moral reasoning reported in chapter 4, the present study measures the likelihood of endorsement of the use of violence according to four motives; to defend one's honour, group, respect, and in self-defence. In addition, we measure the likelihood of self-reported violent behaviour and victimisation among a large sample of at-risk youths across three degrees of gang involvement: non-gang involved youths, gang associates, and gang members.

The study seeks to establish whether degree of involvement with the youth group (in this case, degree of involvement with a gang) predicts differences in the youths' practical reasoning about violence. Previous research shows that gang membership is strongly correlated with violent behaviour and victimisation. In this study, we turn our attention to the youth's motives to use violence and test whether the likelihood of endorsing these motives increases alongside higher degrees of gang involvement. This line of inquiry aligns with the argument made in the previous chapter. Violence is far from being a binary outcome and is rather understood to be used with meaning and purpose by young people who belong to violent groups. This study adds to this complexity by testing whether the degree of involvement with the gang predicts changes in the youths' use of violence.

The article that follows was co-authored by Dedios and Jovchelovitch. Dedios designed and carried out the study, performed data analysis, outlined the article, and authored the draft. Jovchelovitch provided key supervisory assistance, editorial suggestions for the article and served as the secondary author. The instrument used to conduct the study can be found in Appendix 10. The Stata output for the multivariate models can be found in Appendix 11.

Running head: Endorsement of collectivistic violence predicts gang membership.

Endorsement of collectivistic violence predicts gang membership among at-risk youths.

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Abstract

This study focuses on practical reasoning about violence among a sample of at-risk youths by degree of gang involvement. Using survey data, we calculate odds ratios (ORs) from bivariate and multivariate logistic regressions to determine the likelihood of self-reported violent behaviour and victimisation and the likelihood of endorsement of violence driven by four motives; honour, respect, group, and self-defence among youths ranging across three degrees of gang involvement: non-gang involved youths (n=116), gang associates (n=116), and gang members (n=138). All models account for demographic variables and risk factors associated with violent youth behaviour. We find that higher degrees of gang involvement increase the likelihood of general violence including violent behaviour, victimisation, and motivation to use violence in self-defence. When compared to non-gang involved youths, gang members were more likely to have been violent with someone (OR=4.6), to have been victimised (OR= 2.5), and to endorse the use of violence in self-defence (OR=2.3). Gang associates were more likely to have been violent with someone (OR=2), and to endorse the use of violence in self-defence (OR=2.2) than non-gang involved youths. However, the motivation to use violence to defend one's group (OR=3.6) was a marker of gang membership only, suggesting that the endorsement of violence with collectivistic undertones is an added layer in the practical reasoning about violence in the gang. Endorsement of collectivistic violence discriminates between youths who join a gang and those who never do so despite having close ties to one.

Disadvantaged young men account for the vast majority of perpetrators and victims of violence worldwide. Socio-economic factors such as neighbourhood and household poverty contribute considerably to the greater involvement in violence by disadvantaged young people when compared to their middle-income counterparts (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Lynch & Pridemore, 2011; Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002). Association with antisocial peers and involvement in delinquent behaviour are two of the most potent and consistent risk factors for violent behaviour among disadvantaged youth (Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Lipsey & Derzon, 1998). Both of these risk factors are strongly associated with gang membership (Esbensen, Winfree, He, & Taylor, 2001; O'Brien, Daffern, Chu, & Thomas, 2013).

The association between gang membership, violence perpetration, and victimisation (Barnes, Beaver, & Miller, 2010; Curry, Decker, & Jr, 2002; Klein & Maxon, 2006) has fuelled a considerable amount of research seeking to identify the psychological precursors of criminal behaviour among gang-involved youths (Alleyne, Fernandes, & Pritchard, 2014; Alleyne & Wood, 2013). However, the approach's reduction of violent behaviour to criminal behaviour (Alleyne et al., 2014; Niebieszczanski, Harkins, Judson, Smith, & Dixon, 2015; Wood, 2014) contrasts with ethnographic work showing that the enactment of violence in the gang has a logic, and that it is deployed strategically, with meaning and various purposes by gang members (Baird, 2015, 2017; Decker, 1996; Zubillaga, 2009). Therefore, psychological accounts of violence in disadvantaged contexts and within the gang need to account not only for violent behaviour but for the youths' practical reasoning about violence, which refers to how adolescents think about the use of violence for specific motives in daily life. The former can provide much-needed insights into how young people navigate the violent environment and the evaluations that lead them to act violently. Such an approach would add more precision to models aiming to understand the pathways of violent behaviour among young people growing up in violent and disadvantaged contexts.

This study focuses on practical reasoning about use of violence among a sample of at-risk youths in Bogotá, Colombia. We investigate four violence motives: honour, respect, group, and self-defence, alongside self-reported violent behaviour and

victimisation. We evaluate the likelihood of endorsement of the four motives and the likelihood of self-reported violent behaviour and victimisation conditional on their degree of gang involvement. By doing this, we aim to contribute with a more complex picture of violent behaviour in contexts of disadvantage, taking an approach to violence that entails paying attention to young people's motives to act violently. In addition, we test whether these motives vary according to higher degrees of gang involvement, contributing with a comparative approach that is all too rare in the gang literature, yet highly needed (Klein, 2006; Rodgers & Jones, 2009).

BACKGROUND

Defining gang and gang involvement

The gang literature lacks a generalised consensus on a definition of a gang, which has been a primary constraint for empirical research on the topic (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). Researchers have used two main approaches to study the gang, each relying on a different understanding of the gang's structure. The first approach emphasises the structure and function of the gang itself and defines the gang as a highly structured and hierarchical organisation, with clearly identifiable leaders and members who act according to specific goals (Padilla, 1992; Sánchez-Jankowski, 1991; Taylor, 1990). The emphasis on structure and function results in an approach to gang boundaries as clear cut. Therefore, gang affiliation becomes a binary outcome where individuals either belong or do not belong to the gang. The second approach emphasises the fluidity of the social structure of the gang and highlights the role of peer networks and collective behaviour in shaping individual behaviours and attitudes (Curry et al., 2002; Decker, 1996; O'Brien et al., 2013). The gang is conceptualised as a loosely organised group with gradual processes of affiliation leading to varying levels of gang membership (Esbensen et al., 2001; Hagedorn, 1998; Thrasher, 1927; Vigil, 1988).

In this study, we use the second approach to the gang with an emphasis on its fluidity, networks, and collective behaviour. We use the definition provided by previous psychological studies of the gang (Alleyne & Wood, 2010; Weerman et al., 2009; Wood, 2014) as a troublesome youth group that meets face to face, displays

group awareness, is durable and street oriented and whose involvement in illegal activity is part of the group identity. We study gang involvement as a continuum rather than being a binary classification. Previous research has shown that terms like fringe, wannabe, associate, core, or hardcore reflect “the many levels of involvement and the fact that the boundaries of gang membership are penetrable” (Maxon, 1998, p. 2). This same literature highlights the importance of studying gang involvement from the perspective of those involved. This point is supported by the empirical link between self-reported degree of gang involvement and violent behaviour which holds across different gang definitions (Esbensen et al., 2001) and by studies showing that the association between degree of gang membership and overall delinquency holds for self-reported delinquency and data obtained from official records (Curry et al., 2002). A view of the gang as a group of engaged individuals, with penetrable boundaries, and an emphasis on the youths’ perspectives about their own involvement in it frames our study of violence, victimisation, and motives of violence across degree of gang involvement.

Differences between gang members, gang associates, and non-gang involved youths

Most research work on gangs focuses on the differences between gang members and non-gang involved youths. However, a small but growing number of psychological studies have turned their attention to how various behavioural and psychological outcomes vary across the gang involvement continuum (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). Although still scarce (O’Brien et al., 2013), these studies reveal that some gang-related outcomes vary between non-gang involved youths, gang associates (peripheral youths), and gang members.

The starkest difference between gang members and non-gang members pertains offences and criminal activity. Violent offences are key behavioural outcome differentiating gang members from youth who never join gangs, but its predicting power is less clear when it comes to differentiating gang members from gang associates (or peripheral youths). Gang members are more likely than both, non-gang involved youth and offenders who are not involved in gangs, to commit violent offences and crimes (Esbensen, Huizinga, & Weiher, 1993; Gordon et al., 2014). These offences are commonly related to weapons and drugs (Esbensen et al., 1993; Niebieszczanski, Harkins, Judson, Smith, & Dixon, 2015). This finding has been

reported in studies comparing gangs across countries (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005), and in research in the city of Bogotá, where the present study takes place (Escobar-Córdoba, 2006). Additionally, there are indications that gang associates are more likely than non-gang involved youths to commit some types of delinquent behaviour such as crimes against the person (Alleyne & Wood, 2010) and to commit overall delinquency (Curry et al., 2002).

Equally important, studies have found that gang membership is as strongly associated with victimisation as it is with criminal offences (Barnes et al., 2010; Curry et al., 2002; Klein & Maxon, 2006). There is evidence indicating that gang membership contributes to this cycle to a large extent. Longitudinal studies indicate that the effect of self-selection alone does not account for the increase in violent behaviour among gang-involved youths and that gang membership in and of itself contributes to it (Barnes et al., 2010; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, & Tobin, 2003). Studies show a similar picture for victimisation among gang members, where all other things being equal, the risk of being victimised increases after affiliation (DeLisi, Barnes, Beaver, & Gibson, 2009; Taylor, Peterson, Esbensen, & Freng, 2007). Therefore, gang membership is associated with a general increase in violent experiences for the individual, not only as perpetrator but as a victim. This general increase in the experience of violence is coherent with the logic and purpose of violence in the gang, which goes above and beyond the focus on criminal behaviour emphasized in the psychological literature (Baird, 2017; Decker, 1996; Zubillaga, 2009), which is an important point that will be elaborated in the next section.

There are also critical psychological underpinnings of gang membership. Gang members are more impulsive, more risk-seeking, and have stronger anti-authority attitudes, as well as less parental control than non-gang involved youths (Alleyne & Wood, 2010; Esbensen et al., 1993). They are also more likely than non-gang involved youths to hold non-conforming attitudes towards stealing, lying or harming people, and to feel less guilty about fighting and harming others (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). As for peer relations, gang members are more likely than non-gang involved youths to commit to negative peers (i.e. those who do not speak up against bad behaviour) and to delinquent peers. They are not likely to commit to positive peers (i.e. those who speak up against bad behaviour) (Esbensen et al.,

2001). Additionally, gang members are more likely than non-gang involved youths to expect negative labels from such as “bad” or “problematic” from authority figures like teachers and parents (Esbensen et al., 1993). Lastly, gang members attribute more importance to social status than non-gang involved youths, but no differences are reported between gang associates and non-gang involved youths (Alleyne & Wood, 2010).

Acting and thinking violence in the gang

Psychological research provides insights into the cognitive mechanisms that funnel violent behaviour among gang-involved youths. Research shows that the degree to which youngsters think that fighting is an appropriate response in specific situations is a strong predictor of gang membership (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). In this line of reasoning, research on moral disengagement has received particular attention by researchers, as it is considered to be a crucial enabler of violent behaviour in the gang. Moral disengagement is a set of cognitive strategies that work by disengaging the self-regulation mechanisms that prevent people from inflicting harm on others (Bandura, 1999; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996).

Dehumanisation, in particular, has been found to partially account for the relationship between gang membership and violent crime (Alleyne et al., 2014).

Research shows that gang members are more likely than non-gang involved youths to use various moral disengagement strategies to justify violent acts (Niebieszczanski et al., 2015). In particular, they are more likely to sanitise their behaviour using euphemistic labelling and to blame the victims for their violent actions (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). On their part, gang associates are more likely than non-gang involved youths to displace responsibility to justify their violent acts (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). Due to the strong correlation between gang membership and criminal activity, researchers have sought to determine whether moral disengagement facilitates offending, gang membership, or both. Studies have compared individuals who offend as part of a gang against those who offend as part of a group that is not a gang. They find no differences between the two groups in moral disengagement (Niebieszczanski et al., 2015) which suggests that group processes play a role in moral disengagement in addition to an individual proclivity to morally disengage (Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012; Wood, 2014).

Despite the growing amount of work focusing on the psychological precursors of violent behaviour, psychological research has paid less attention to the collective features of violence in the gang (Decker, 1996; Littman, 2018) and their influence on how gang-involved youths think about violence, the motives they have to aggress, and how they decide to deploy violence. Statements used to assess moral reasoning about violence tend to conflate different motives for violence. For example, the statement *it is alright to fight when the respect of your group is threatened* (Alleyne et al., 2014) does not allow to tell whether the motive is the collective itself, or a threat to the group's honour, or its status. Practical reasoning about violence, which refers to how and when youth decide to use violence with specific motives in daily life, does not seem to be explained solely by moral disengagement. Ethnographic studies on gangs in Latin America have developed a rich understanding of how gang members make sense of violent acts and their various motives. A core message of these studies is that the use of violence by gang members responds to a logic of defensive violence but also one of men socialisation and success in contexts of exclusion (Baird, 2015, 2017; Castillo Berthier & Jones, 2009; Zubillaga, 2009), all of which draws a picture of shared meanings mediating the use of violence. This complexity needs to be accounted for in psychological accounts of gang violence.

There is a considerable gap in psychological knowledge about the motives driving the use of violence among at-risk youths and whether these vary alongside the gang membership continuum. Addressing this gap through a focus on motives for violence affords the chance to move from the study of violence as a binary outcome (i.e. violent behaviour yes or no) to a better understanding of practical reasoning in relation to violence, one that is moved by identifiable reasons that youngsters deem enough to aggress in certain circumstances. As shown in Chapter 4, these evaluations are guided by a combination of moral reasoning about the righteousness of violence, but also by the use of violence in instrumental ways, with meaning and purpose.

In summary, studies comparing youths who do and do not belong to gangs, as well as studies comparing youths across the gang involvement continuum provide critical insights about the relationship between gang affiliation and its correlation with

psychological and behavioural outcomes pertaining violence. A strength of these studies is their comparative approach, which allows uncovering correlations between outcomes and degree of gang involvement. They also can measure outcomes in a dose-response gradient, a criterion of causality. A weakness of these studies is their focus on violent behaviour in general terms, often as a binary outcome, which requires further specification of the youths' motives to act violently. Ethnographic studies, on the other hand, have provided in-depth understandings of the use, understanding, and reasoning about violence in the gang. However, these studies do not compare their findings across groups, and none of them has investigated the use of violence driven by motives along the gang membership continuum.

This study

This study investigates the endorsement of the use of violence following four motives; to defend one's honour, respect, group, and in self-defence. Besides, we assess self-reported violent behaviour and victimisation. We evaluate the likelihood of these outcomes across the degree of gang involvement. We draw from a sample of at-risk youth, who are either non-gang involved, gang affiliated, or gang members. Previous research has shown that gang-involved youths consider the use of violence to defend honour, respect, group, and in self-defence to be morally right (Chapter 4). The study of the motives that youths consider to be valid when it comes to using violence can provide valuable insights about their understanding of the social world and their practical reasoning on how to regulate social relations (Fiske & Rai, 2015). From this perspective, the use of violence has a logic and is deployed strategically, with meaning and purpose.

We hypothesise that the likelihood of endorsement of each of the four motives will differ across degrees of gang involvement. We expect that higher levels of involvement with a gang will be associated with a higher likelihood of endorsement of each of the four motives for violence. Besides, and in line with previous work, we expect that increasing degrees of gang involvement will increase the likelihood of self-reported violent behaviour and victimisation. Therefore, we ask:

Does the likelihood of self-reported violent behaviour and victimisation increase alongside the degree of gang involvement?

Does the likelihood of endorsing violence to defend one's honour, respect, group, and self-defence increase among at-risk youth with higher degrees of gang involvement?

This study contributes to the literature by focusing on the motives at-risk youth have to engage in violence and by testing whether these motives are related to the level of involvement with a gang. Original empirical data with gang members is scarce as are studies comparing differences as a function of gang involvement, yet both are highly needed (Baird, 2017; O'Brien et al., 2013). Because violence endorsement is a credible pathway to violent behaviour (Ali, Swahn, & Sterling, 2011), differences in the endorsement of the use of violence according to different motives among at-risk youths across the gang involvement continuum can improve our understanding of the youths' motivations to act violently, above and beyond the general increase of violence and victimisation that has been reported in previous studies. This, in turn, can inform violence prediction and prevention efforts and increase our understanding of the use of violence by gang members following a logic, with meaning and purpose.

METHODS

Procedure

Participants were recruited from an organisation in Bogotá, Colombia serving young people who are involved in street dynamics, including youngsters who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless, and youths at physical, psychological or social risk in unstable households. The organisation has different locations and young people access them based on the address they provide at the time of signing in. In this study, participants were recruited from five sites.

Participants were invited by the site coordinator to take part in the study, explaining that participation was voluntary and anonymous. Informed consent was obtained before proceeding with data collection. Participants were asked to complete an online survey. The mean response time was 6 minutes. The research study was approved by the organisation, which was part of a larger research project approved by the ethics committee of the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Sample

A sample of $n=370$ youths distributed across five sites was employed for this study. 97% of the contacted individuals agreed to participate in the study. The sample was evenly distributed across gender (male 54%, female 46%). For household composition, the most common arrangements were “living with mother only” (31%), “living with both parents” (29%), and “does not live with family” (20%). Age was evenly distributed across groups.

Even though our sample was not randomly selected, it is not clear that such sampling was desirable in this case. A contribution of the present study was to recruit a sample of at-risk youths, including gang associates and gang members, outside the school context, attaining a high response rate (97%). Gang members are a hard to access population, which is one of the main factors contributing to the lack of empirical work with this population (Baird, 2017). Our sample comprised by risk youths enabled us access to a considerable number of gang members and gang affiliate youths. Previous studies on gangs commonly survey high school students and therefore tend to under sample gang members because they are at higher risk of dropping out of school (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005).

Predictor: Degree of gang involvement

Following previous research (Curry et al., 2002; Esbensen et al., 2001), we measured self-reported degree of gang involvement using a categorical variable with three levels; gang membership, gang association, and no-gang involvement. Gang membership was measured using two items: “*Are you in a gang?*” and “*Have you ever been in a gang?*” Participants who answered positively to any of the two questions were assigned to the gang member group. Gang association was measured using four items: “*Do you have gang members as friends?*”, “*Have you worn gang colours?*”, “*Do you hang out with gang members?*”, and “*Have you flashed gang signs?*” Participants who answered positively to any of the four items were classified as gang associates. Lastly, participants who answered negatively to the six items described above were classified as non-gang involved youths.

Outcomes:

Self-reported violent behaviour and victimisation: Gang membership is known to increase both, the risk of violent behaviour and the risk of victimisation. We measured self-reported violent behaviour (*Have you been violent with someone?*) and self-reported victimisation using a positive answer to any of the following three questions: *Have you been threatened with a gun?* *Have you been shot?* and *Have you been hit by a bullet?* All were dichotomous variables coded 1 (yes) and 0 (no). These questions were used by Curry (2002) in his work on youth gang involvement and delinquency.

Endorsement of the use of violence according to four motives: We measured the endorsement of violence following four different motives. The specific motives were chosen based on previous qualitative research focused on moral reasoning about violence among disadvantaged youths in Colombia (Chapter 4). The four motives were: group (*“Would you use violence to defend your group?”*), honour (*“Would you use violence to defend your honour or your family’s honour?”*), respect (*“Would you use violence to defend your reputation? That is, so people don’t lose respect for you”*), and self-defence (*“Would you use violence in self-defence? That is, to defend yourself or your family if someone is going to harm you?”*). Each motive was used as a single dichotomous variable coded 1 (yes) and 0 (no).

Covariates:

Information was collected about demographic characteristics, including gender, age, site, and household composition, and risk factors, including marijuana use, alcohol use, and exposure to gun violence. We used these demographic and risk variables as covariates in the multivariate models because of their known positive correlation with youth violence (Curry et al., 2002; Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Thornberry et al., 2003). All were categorical variables.

Analysis

Descriptive analysis: We obtained descriptive information for all variables, including degree of gang involvement, all outcomes, and all covariates. Table 1 in the results section shows the descriptive information by degree of gang membership.

Odds ratios for violent behaviour and victimisation by degree of gang involvement:
We calculated odds ratios (ORs) from bivariate and multivariate logistic regressions to estimate the strength of two associations; the association between degree of gang affiliation and likelihood of violent behaviour and the association between degree of gang affiliation and likelihood of victimisation. In the multivariate models, we controlled for gender, site, household composition, age, use of marihuana, and use of alcohol.

Odds ratios for the endorsement of violence motives by degree of gang involvement:
We calculated ORs from bivariate logistic regressions to estimate the strength of the associations between degree of gang affiliation and endorsement of each of the four violence motives. These analyses allowed to estimate the extent to which degree of gang involvement independently affected the likelihood of endorsement of the use of violence to defend honour, respect, group, and in self-defence. Next, we assessed the ORs from multivariate logistic regressions to estimate the strength of the associations between degree of gang involvement and endorsement of each violence motive, controlling for the following covariates: age, gender, and household composition, site, marihuana use, alcohol use, and exposure to gun violence.

Model diagnostics: Two steps were completed to run model diagnostics. First, we calculated the variance inflation factor (VIF) to check for collinearity in the regression models. We found a mean VIF=1.42 (for the motives models) and a mean VIF=1.41 (for the violence and victimisation models) which allows to rule out multicollinearity between the variables used in the multivariate models.

Additionally, we calculated the condition indexes and variance decomposition proportions (coldiag) in order to test for collinearity among the independent variables in the regression models. The maximum obtained value was 10.31. Since none of them were found to be above 30, collinearity could be ruled out (Belsley, 1991). Lastly, we checked for missing data. None of the variables had over 1% of missing data. These checks suggest a parsimonious model.

RESULTS

Degree of gang involvement

Youngsters in our sample reported being non-gang affiliated (31%), gang associates (31%), and gang members (37%). The prevalence of gang members in this sample was higher than previous studies on gang membership in low-income schools. These report this prevalence to be around 11%-17%. The prevalence of gang associates, however, was lower than the 57% reported in such studies (Curry et al., 2002). The higher prevalence of gang members in our sample is likely due to our sampling population. Many studies on gang membership survey school students, which tend to oversample gang associate youths (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). Gang members are not well represented in these samples because they are more likely than gang associates and non-gang members to drop out of school (Thornberry et al., 2003; Young, Fitzgerald, Hallsworth, & Joseph, 2007), which is one of the reasons why they are a hard to access population. Our data was collected in an organisation serving at-risk youths, most of whom have dropped out from the school system. This may in part explain the high prevalence of gang members we found. Further to this point, Dmitrieva and colleagues (2014) report a similar prevalence of gang members (37%) in a study conducted among adolescent offenders. Table 5.1, below shows the descriptive results for all outcomes and covariates, by degree of gang membership.

Table 5.1: Descriptive results

Variable	Total		Non-gang		Gang associate		Gang member	
Outcomes								
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Violent behavior (yes)	183	50	29	16	54	30	100	55
Victimization (yes)	157	43	26	17	41	26	90	57
Motive: Self-defense (yes)	316	86	86	27	104	33	126	40
Motive: Respect (yes)	153	41	38	25	44	29	71	46
Motive: Group (yes)	98	27	15	15	23	23	60	61
Motive: Honor (yes)	218	59	52	24	69	32	97	44
Covariates								
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender								
Male	201	54	42	21	62	31	97	48
Female	169	46	74	44	54	32	41	24
Site								
#1	101	27	30	30	22	22	49	49
#2	71	19	22	31	22	31	27	38
#3	166	45	58	35	64	39	44	27
#4	23	6	3	13	7	30	13	57
# 5	7	2	3	43	1	14	3	43
Other	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	100
Household composition								
Lives with both parents	107	29	30	28	35	33	42	39
Mother only	116	31	32	28	44	38	40	34
Father only	15	4	5	33	4	27	6	40
Grandparents	15	4	3	20	6	40	6	40
Does not live with family	74	20	30	41	20	27	24	32
Partner	10	3	2	20	1	10	7	70
Partner and children	33	9	14	42	6	18	13	39
Age								
18-19	109	29	28	26	48	44	33	30
20-21	90	24	27	30	22	24	41	46
22-23	78	21	27	35	25	32	26	33
24-25	93	25	34	37	21	23	38	41
Marihuana use (yes)	218	59	31	14	70	32	117	54
Alcohol use (yes)	340	92	98	29	111	33	131	39
Threatened with gun (yes)	132	36	23	17	35	27	74	56

In our sample, 50% of participants reported having been violent with someone, and 43% reported having been victimised. Gang members accounted for more than half of those who reported having been violent with someone (55%) and those who had been victimised (57%). 86% of participants would use violence in self-defence and 59% to defend their honour. 41% would use violence so others respect them, and 27% to defend their group. However, when looking at these results by degree of gang membership, a higher relative percentage of gang members answered yes to all these questions. The sample was evenly distributed across gender (54% males, 46% females). 48% of males in the sample were gang members, while 24% of females in the sample were gang members. Roughly a third of males and a third of females were gang associates. 59% of participants had used marihuana, and 92% had used alcohol, while 36% had been exposed to gun violence. Gang members showed a higher relative percentage than the other two groups in relation to marihuana use and

gun violence, but the incidence of alcohol use was distributed more evenly across the gang membership continuum (more than 29% in each group had used alcohol).

Likelihood of violent behaviour and victimisation by degree of gang involvement

Degree of gang involvement was found to be positively and strongly associated with the likelihood of violent behaviour and likelihood of victimisation. Gang members were 4.6 times more likely to have been violent and 2.5 times more likely to have been victimised than non-gang involved youths. On their part, gang associates were 2 times more likely than non-gang involved youths to have been violent. No differences were found in the likelihood of victimisation between gang associates and non-gang involved youths. Overall, these findings indicate an increase in general violence alongside an increase in gang involvement, with more severe violence at the end of the continuum, where gang members are more likely than everyone else to have been victimised.

Table 5.2: Likelihood of violent behaviour and victimisation by gang involvement

	Violent behaviour†				Victimisation††			
	AOR*	P	CI		AOR*	P	CI	
Non-gang involved								
Gang associate	2.0	0.03	1.07	3.68	1.2	0.64	0.59	2.36
Gang member	4.6	< 0.001	2.39	8.91	2.5	0.01	1.24	4.96

*Adjusted for demographic and risk factors

† R²=0.19, ††

R²=0.28

Likelihood of endorsing violence by four motives by degree of gang involvement

Table 5.3 below shows the unadjusted (OR) and adjusted (AOR) odds ratios for the endorsement of the use of violence by four motives: group, honour, respect, and in self-defence by degree of gang involvement. The reference group in all comparisons is the non-gang involved group. The unadjusted models show that gang members and gang associates are more likely than non-gang involved youths to endorse the use of violence to defend their group, honour, and in self-defence. Gang members were found to be more likely than non-gang involved participants to endorse the use of violence so people respect them.

The adjusted models (AOR) show a more nuanced picture. When compared to non-gang involved youths, gang members are 3.6 times more likely to endorse the use of violence to defend their group and 2.3 times more likely to endorse the use of violence in self-defence. On their part, gang associates are 2.2 times more likely than non-gang involved youths to endorse the use of violence in self-defence. In summary, non-gang involved youths are less likely than both, gang associates and gang members to endorse the use of violence in self-defence. The increased likelihood of the endorsement of violence to defend one's group, on the other hand, emerges as a distinctive characteristic of gang membership. This is because gang associates are no different from non-gang involved youths in this respect.

Table 5.3: Endorsement of the use of violence for different motives by degree of gang involvement

	Group				Honour				Self defence				Respect			
	OR	P	CI		OR	P	CI		OR	P	CI		OR	P	CI	
Non-gang involved																
Gang associate	1.7	0.16	0.8	3.4	1.8	0.03	1.1	3.0	3.0	0.01	1.5	6.3	1.3	0.41	0.7	2.2
Gang member	5.2	< 0.001	2.8	9.9	3.0	< 0.001	1.8	5.0	4.0	< 0.001	1.9	8.4	2.2	0.01	1.3	3.7
	AOR*	P	CI		AOR*	P	CI		AOR*	P	CI		AOR*	P	CI	
Non-gang involved																
Gang associate	1.2	0.71	0.5	2.5	1.2	0.53	0.7	2.2	2.2	0.067**	0.9	5.3	1.0	0.88	0.5	1.7
Gang member	3.6	0.001	1.7	7.6	1.7	0.12	0.9	3.2	2.3	0.097**	0.9	6.0	1.5	0.18	0.8	2.8

*Adjusted for demographic characteristics and risk factors

** Significant at 0.1

R2 Group=0.15, Honour=0.11, SelfDef=0.16, Respect=0.02

DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined the endorsement of the use of violence according to four motives; group, honour, respect, and self-defence among a sample of at-risk youth. Additionally, we assessed self-reported violent behaviour and victimisation. We evaluated the likelihood of these outcomes across three levels of gang involvement; non-gang involved, gang associate, and gang member. We find that degree of gang involvement is positively and strongly associated with the likelihood of violent behaviour, victimisation, and endorsement of the use of violence in self-defence. This pattern indicates an increase in general violence (violent behaviour, victimisation, and violence in self-defence) alongside increasing levels of gang involvement. Our study extends previous findings by showing that the endorsement of the use of violence to defend the group is a unique marker of gang membership. This study contributes to previous studies by showing that the endorsement of violence with collectivistic undertones, this is, violence to defend the group, is characteristic of gang members only and stands in addition to the violence of a more general type that paves the way to the involvement with a gang.

Our findings about the increase in general violence alongside increased gang involvement are coherent with previous research showing that gang membership is consistently associated with increased violent and criminal behaviour and increased risk of victimisation (Alleyne & Wood, 2010; Barnes et al., 2010; Curry et al., 2002; DeLisi et al., 2009; Klein & Maxon, 2006). Our focus on motives contributes by revealing that the increase in general violence alongside higher degrees of gang involvement -which is usually studied using behavioural measurements- can also be observed in the youths' practical reasoning about violence. We find an increased likelihood of endorsing violence in self-defence on the part of gang associates and gang members when compared to non-gang involved youths. Together, these findings reflect a cycle of violence where youngsters may find themselves aggressing more but also having to defend themselves more often. The convergence between studies measuring behaviour (Barnes et al., 2010; Klein & Maxon, 2006) and reasoning-oriented measurements on the same issue add complexity to our understanding of the experience of violence and engagement with it by at-risk youths across the gang involvement continuum. In light of the previous literature, our findings contribute by showing that the increase in violent experiences alongside

increasing involvement with a gang is not only observable at the level of behaviour. In fact, these experiences are assimilated into how young people reason practically about the use of violence in their day to day life.

The likelihood of endorsing violence to defend one's group was 3.6 times higher among gang members when compared to non-gang involved youths. Because we find no differences between gang associates and non-gang involved youths in this respect, our results suggest that the willingness to use violence to defend one's group is a marker of gang membership only. Research on moral reasoning across the gang involvement continuum has found that gang members justify the use of violence to defend their group as a moral act, which in turn facilitates the enactment of violence in these situations (Niebieszczanski et al., 2015). However, as discussed in the first section of the study, the statements used to assess moral reasoning tend to conflate different motives for violence. By focusing on practical reasoning about violence, and isolating the group motive, we show that gang members endorse a collectivist type of violence aimed at defending the group, which stands in addition to their heightened endorsement of violence in self-defence. This stands in strong opposition to non-gang involved youths and gang associates.

The findings on the increased endorsement of violence to defend one's group by gang members converge with and enrich previous research on the cycle of collective violence in violent groups. Previous research has shown that the perpetration of violence on behalf of a group increases the identification with it, which in turn increases future group-related violence (Littman, 2018). Our results point to the collectivistic undertones that motivate the endorsement of violence in gangs and highlight the importance of exploring in more depth group processes and identity dynamics in gang research (Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012; Wood, 2014). In Colombia, ethnographic evidence on gangs parallels these insights by showing how gang members "go to war" not only to defend their territory or economic interests but to "defend their group's collective, their esteem, their social status" in a dynamic where the gang gives to the self in exchange for gang services that allow the reproduction of the gang (Baird, 2017). By focusing on the endorsement of this type of violence rather than on the behaviour itself, we focus on a less explored aspect of group violence, which has to do with the practical reasoning about it. We suggest

that violence to defend one's group is not merely an automatic process void of agency, but one that is anchored in how youths evaluate themselves, their group, and the social world they inhabit.

Taken together, these results suggest a general increase in violent behaviour, victimisation, and willingness to aggress in self-defence alongside increasing levels of gang involvement. Also, we find that gang members were more likely to endorse violence motives with collectivistic undertones (i.e. group). These findings suggest a qualitative difference between violence to defend oneself and violence to defend a collective. Only the later differentiates between youths who join a gang from those who are gang affiliates or not involved with a gang. This finding suggests the existence of an added layer of violence – violence used for collectivistic motives – that is not observed unless youths belong to a gang. Therefore, the violence used for collectivistic motives adds to, but is different, from the increase in the more general type of violence described above.

This differentiation highlights the importance of a focus on practical reasoning targeting the youths' motives for the use of violence and shows its hypothesis-generating potential. By taking into account both, different violence motives and degrees of gang involvement, our approach helps to inform and refine explanatory models built on behavioural-based violence outcomes and shows the need to thread more finely to study how violence is used by youths who join gangs and those who never join them despite its closeness to them. While gang associates are more likely than non-gang involved youths to have been violent with someone and to endorse the use of violence in self-defence, they are not different from non-gang involved youths when it comes to the endorsement of violence to defend one's group. Lastly, our findings evidence both large and nuanced differences in the practical reasoning of youths despite their common at-risk situation, adding to our understanding of variation in adolescent outcomes in contexts of adversity.

Limitations

Our study has limitations that should be addressed. First, the survey did not ask participants whether they belong to a group. Instead, it asked whether they would use violence to defend their group. As a result, we cannot discount the possibility

that the increased likelihood of gang members to endorse the use of violence to defend their group may be biased by the lack of membership to a youth group on the side of gang associates and non-gang involved youths. We worked under the assumption that most young people will associate with a peer group (Brown, 1990; Hartup, 1996; Sussman, Pokhrel, Ashmore, & Brown, 2007) and could, therefore, refer to it when answering the survey question. Besides, we were interested in the practical reasoning about the use of violence to defend one's group which we phrased as a hypothetical question (i.e. "would you use violence") rather than a factual question. This phrasing should diminish to some extent the potential for bias. Nevertheless, this caveat should be taken into account in the interpretation of the result mentioned above.

A second limitation is the cross-sectional design, as it prevents us from knowing whether the increase in the endorsement of the different violence motives occurs as a result of gang affiliation or whether self-selection effects lead specific youths to become part of a gang. Based on previous research, it would be expected that an enhancement process is at work, where the gang self-selects young people with proclivities to violent behaviour, which are then strengthened and reinforced by the youths' affiliation with the gang (Barnes et al., 2010; Thornberry et al., 2003). The study can serve as a stepping stone for future research focusing on longitudinal associations that can explain the gang socialization process accounting for self-selection effects. Specifically, it is necessary to learn what determines the decision of gang affiliates to become gang members or remain outside the gang. Longitudinal studies should allow us to clarify this particular aspect, and we encourage such future work.

With these limitations in mind, our study contributes to the current literature by corroborating the relationship between violence, victimisation and gang membership and indicating an increased likelihood of the endorsement of violence in self-defence alongside higher degrees of gang involvement. On top of the increase in general violence, the study shows that gang members, in particular, are more likely to endorse the use of violence to defend their group. This motive reflects a practical reasoning about violence with collectivistic undertones that sets gang members apart from gang affiliates and non-gang involved youths among a sample of at-risk

youths. Overall, the study shows relevant differences between violence to defend oneself and violence to defend a collective and point to a use of violence with meaning and purpose on the part of gang members. Therefore, violence with collectivistic undertones does not seem to merely be an automatic process void of agency on the part of youngsters who belong to a gang, but a process that anchored in how youths evaluate themselves, their group, and the social world they inhabit.

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CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, I bring together the aims of the PhD and the findings of the three empirical studies to discuss their significance in relation to the role of the youth group in adolescent development under contextual adversity. I articulate the empirical, methodological, and theoretical contributions of the PhD, state its limitations, delineate guidelines for future work, and provide some final remarks.

6.1. Aims and findings

In this PhD, meaning-making processes and participation in the youth group were approached as processes of human development (Rogoff, 2003a). This research work was grounded on two key assumptions. The first one was the mutually constituting roles of mind and culture in relation to each other (Miller, 1997; Rogoff, 2003b; Shweder, 1990). The second one was a view of contexts of disadvantage as rich and diverse representational fields where meaning-making processes, shared understandings, practices, and valuations of the world mediate the development process of individuals, just like they do in any other context (Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2015; Jovchelovitch, 2007; Leung & Shek, 2011).

The conceptual point of departure was a view of the youth group as a system of shared meanings and participation where group-level processes of sensemaking emerge. Accordingly, the methodological design was set to study how processes of meaning-making and participation in the youth group (i.e. shared understandings of peace and violence) link with individual level socio-cognitive outcomes in adolescence (i.e. possible selves, moral reasoning and practical reasoning about violence), seeking to compare these processes and outcomes by type of youth group and degree of involvement with it. The elaboration of the theory and methodological frame, reported in Chapter 2, was the first sub-aim of the PhD. This work laid the ground for the empirical component of the PhD, whose findings I now summarise.

6.1.1. Summary of study 1 (Chapter 3):

Study 1 comprised qualitative interviews and participant observation with members of the youth organisation “Young peacebuilders”. The study approached the youth

group as a cultural community seeking to explore the links between the process of participation in peacebuilding activities, the group's peacebuilding goals and the possible selves of group members. Findings revealed two group goals: keeping young people outside the cycle of violence and transforming violent ways of relating. At its core, the first goal relies on a notion of youths as capable of choosing whether they engage in the cycle of violence, a narrative that fundamentally questions the link between contexts of disadvantage and youth violence. The second goal revolved around the youths' evaluations of how social relations ought to be conducted. Respect for others and equal treatment were important principles in the formulation of this goal. The analysis of participation in peacebuilding activities revealed that the constant movement in and out of new roles and the deployment of skills were a core characteristic of the process of participation in the youth group. We find that the content of the group goals, as well as the process of participation through roles and skills, converge in the youths' understandings of who they can be in the future, in particular in their elaborations of hoped for possible selves. The hoped for possible selves reveal a desire to contribute to young people's wellbeing and to improve the community as ways of building peace, and reflect evaluations of what is considered a desirable and valuable possible self that aligns with the group's goals.

As a whole, the study results provide an account of the mutually constituting nature of the cultural community, participation in it, and its impact on individual development. It reveals group level understandings of peace and further show that the group's understandings of right and desirable permeate not only present-oriented representations of the self but future-oriented content in the form of possible selves.

6.1.2. Summary of study 2 (Chapter 4):

Study 2 explored group-level understandings of violence among members of violent and non-violent groups and sought to determine whether these understandings were linked to the youths' moral reasoning about violence. It entailed qualitative interviews with members of violent (n=34) and non-violent youth groups (n=30). The study showed similarities and key differences in the understandings of violence by type of group. All youths defined violence as physical and psychological harm. Individuals may harm others as a result of personal (for example, stress) or

structural factors (for example, classism). A key difference between members of violent and non-violent groups was that only members of the latter understood groups, in addition to individuals, as agents and victims of violence. This difference also emerged in the youths' attributions of the causes of group violence, where only members of violent groups saw violence triggered by offences to the group as a legitimate cause of violence. These results reveal complex elaborations of the meaning of violence within the youth group and show differences in how violence is understood and made sense of between members of violent and non-violent groups.

In regards to moral reasoning about violence, the findings show that the vast majority of study participants considered the use of violence to be morally right in self-defence. However, members of violent groups were significantly more likely than members of non-violent groups to consider that violence is righteously used to defend one's group, honour and respect. The differences in moral reasoning about violence between members of violent and non-violent groups are coherent with the differences in group level understandings of violence described above. Specifically, members from violent groups used the unity moral motive to support the righteous use of violence to protect and defend the wellbeing of the collective. The study suggests an entanglement between meaning-making practices in the youth group (i.e. group level understanding of violence) and structures of thought (i.e. moral reasoning about violence). It questions approaches portraying disadvantaged youth as acting violently as a mere result of lack of self-control and impulsiveness, showing instead that violence has a logic, meaning, and purpose anchored in moral evaluations about how social relations ought to be.

6.1.3. Summary of study 3 (Chapter 5):

Study 3 studied variations in individual level outcomes according to degree of involvement with the youth group. Specifically, the study focused on practical reasoning about violence by degree of gang involvement in a sample of at-risk youths (n=370). Using a survey, the study measured the likelihood of endorsement of violence by four motives (self-defence, group, honour, and respect), and also violent behaviour and victimisation among non-gang involved youths, gang associates, and gang members. We find an increase in the likelihood of violent behaviour, victimisation, and endorsement of the use of violence in self-defence

alongside higher degrees of gang involvement. This finding is consistent with previous research on gang involvement and violent behaviour (Alleyne & Wood, 2010; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). We further find that the likelihood of endorsing violence to defend one's group is characteristic of gang members only. The study finds that it is the violence with collectivistic undertones rather than the more general violence what differentiates at-risk youths who move on to join gangs from those who do not, despite having ties to one.

As a whole, the three empirical studies of the PhD reveal meaning-making processes at work within the youth group pertaining morally relevant themes, which are made evident in the group level understandings of peacebuilding and violence. These findings talk directly to the second sub-aim of the dissertation, which sought to determine whether meaning-making processes pertaining to salient content of the social sphere could be studied at the level of the youth group. Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate that the youth group is a space where young people elaborate shared meanings pertaining morally relevant aspects of the context where they live, as evidenced by the group level understandings of peace and violence.

The studies also show a connection between shared understandings of peace and violence within the youth group and the socio-cognitive outcomes studied in this PhD: possible selves, moral reasoning, and practical reasoning about violence. This point pertains to the third sub-aim of the dissertation which sought to determine whether meaning-making processes and participation had an observable impact on socio-cognitive outcomes among youth group members. The evidence presented here about the connection between group-level and individual socio-cognitive outcomes results from an in-depth study of how young people represent the social world in the context of the youth group. It informs about how shared meanings and participation in the youth group are entangled with the youth's developing conceptual structures (Helwig, 1995), specifically, with self-representations into the future, moral reasoning, and practical reasoning about violence.

Equally important, we present evidence that these socio-cognitive outcomes vary by type of group young people belong to and by degree of involvement with the youth group. This relates to the fourth sub-aim of the PhD, that sought to determine whether variations in the type of group (i.e. violent and non-violent) and in the

degree of involvement with the youth group (i.e. degree of gang involvement) could be linked to variations in individual-level socio-cognitive outcomes (i.e. moral and practical reasoning about violence).

The fifth-sub aim of the PhD was to argue that the youth group, as a shared system of meanings and participation containing criteria of righteousness and desirability, constitutes a relevant level of analysis in the study of adolescent development. This view of the youth group can contribute to research on adolescent development in contextual disadvantage by accounting for semiotic considerations pertaining to the social world, enriching the psychological study of developmental outcomes. The former is essential for an improved understanding of the significant variation in socio-cognitive outcomes that is found among young people growing up under contextual adversity. This sub-aim is covered in the next section. In it, I discuss how the focus on group level understandings of peace and violence and their connections to individual level socio-cognitive outcomes reveals crucial differences in the youths' evaluations of righteousness and desirability pertaining to ideal models of social relations as well as the youth's positioning in relation to the context where they live. Such differences, inferred from the studies' findings on possible selves, moral, and practical reasoning about violence, reveal the importance of accounting for shared meanings emerging at the level of the youth group, and for the role of participation in the youth group when studying adolescent developmental outcomes in contextual adversity.

6.2. Discussion

The research conducted in this PhD provides evidence of complex and diverse representations of the social world developed by young people in contexts of disadvantage. In this research work, I emphasised these meanings and their connection with individual level outcomes, paying attention to the shared criteria of righteousness and desirability contained in both, group-level representations of peace and violence, and individual outcomes such as possible selves, moral reasoning and practical reasoning about violence. As a whole, the findings of the PhD point to some crucial differences in the criteria of righteousness and desirability young people apply to social relations and their positioning in relation to the context of disadvantage where they live. It is to this discussion that I now turn, seeking to

stress the importance of accounting for different systems of shared meanings to be found in contexts of disadvantage. Approaching them from a comparative angle is useful because it contributes to producing insights from the often-overlooked variation that exists in adolescent developmental outcomes in contexts of disadvantage.

6.2.1. Models of social relations in the youth group

The empirical studies of the PhD reveal differences in the youths' models of social relations according to the type of youth group they belong to and by the degree of involvement with it. Models of social relations refer to criteria of righteousness and desirability about how social relations ought to be, which I infer from the youths' use of moral violence to regulate social relations (Fiske & Rai, 2015). This is complemented with the study of group-level understandings of violence and group-level understandings of peace referring to how social relationships should be. Based on the PhD findings, a key difference in the models of social relations between members of violent and non-violent groups is a conceptualisation, by the former, of violence to defend one's group (the gang, the family) as moral or righteous. This variation reflects between-group differences in the youths' judgments of what constitutes harm and in their understandings of the moral obligations one has with one's group. A more in-depth discussion of these differences, to which I now turn, help to elucidate how youths from violent and non-violent groups conceive of and regulate social relations despite living the same local world.

The youth group, like any other developmental context, is permeated by the broader cultural system in significant ways, including culturally shaped patterns of interpersonal distance (Chen, 2011). Research on adolescent development in Latin America shows the positive value attributed to emotional closeness and the intense sociability that characterises interpersonal relations in this region of the world (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2013; Rodríguez, Perez-Brena, Updegraff, & Umaña-Taylor, 2014). At the same time, ethnographic work on interpersonal ideology in Colombia indicates that it revolves around the crucial importance of human connectedness and relationships, whose demands should take precedence over and above individual desires (Fitch, 1990). The youth groups studied in the PhD were tight-knit, with relationships between youths reflecting close interpersonal

distance and high emotional involvement (Kagitcibasi, 2005, 2011), as evidenced by the highly cohesive and collaborative peacebuilding youth group studied in Chapter 3. However, the evidence gathered in this PhD shows differences in the ideal models of social relations held by youths from violent and non-violent groups above and beyond the orientation to close interpersonal distance and emotional involvement that is common to all.

The comparative study presented in Chapter 4 reveals that young people belonging to violent groups rely heavily on the moral motive of unity to regulate social relations. This moral motive refers to the mandate that one defends one's group integrity and wellbeing (Rai & Fiske, 2011). Youngsters from violent groups were clear in conveying that an attack on the group was considered a moral transgression and the violence used to defend it was considered to be moral violence (Fiske & Rai, 2015). In contrast, members of non-violent groups rejected the righteousness of using violence to defend their group and did not draw from the unity motive when assessing the righteous use of violence. For them, an attack to their group did not equal a moral transgression and therefore did not grant the rightful use of violence to defend it. This difference between groups stands in contrast with the assessment by the large majority of youths across groups about violence being righteously used in self-defence.

These findings add a layer of complexity to social psychological studies on the influence of group processes on social cognition in violent groups. Research indicates that social identity facilitates inter-group conflict and violent behaviour between gangs (Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012; Wood, 2014) while recent work specifies this cycle of violence by showing that violence committed on behalf of a violent group increases the identification with it, which in turn increases violent behaviour (Littman, 2018). Nevertheless, gang researchers have argued that attributing violence in the gang only to group processes reduces the complexity of the problem (Klein, 2005). Portrayals of violence resulting from group processes represent the self as depersonalised or defined in terms of prototypicality and common membership in a symbolic group, and see the motivation to aggress as grounded in intergroup status or competition (Brewer & Yuki, 2010). Without downplaying these processes in the context of the gang, all of which seem coherent

with behaviour related to instrumental and impulsive violence, the present research contributes with a focus on the portion of violence that is moral, which does not seem to come from a depersonalised self, but rather from a self that is acting agentially, based on a sense of that what *ought* be done.

The findings reveal different interpretations of the principle of harm between youths from both types of groups. Implicated in the principle of harm is the idea of territories of the self (Goffman, 1971). In order to apply the principle of harm, one must decide how expansively to define the realm worthy of protection (Shweder, 1982). The study findings reveal a moral boundary around the self –to be defended with moral violence when necessary- that is shared across members of violent and non-violent groups. Our findings reveal that young people belonging to violent groups have an expanded definition of the territories of the self that includes the group. For these youngsters, one's group falls within the realm of the self that ought to be protected. Quite importantly, the interpretation of harm does not only pertain physical harm but also affronts to honour and social reputation, which ought to be protected (Leung & Cohen, 2011; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). Additionally, this understanding of harm is not restricted to the gang, but to other relevant groups such as the family. All of this suggests a distinct view of personhood and social relations by young people belonging to violent groups. These insights are afforded by the comparative approach taken in the research project, which allowed to explore the under-researched issue of moral violence in the youth group in disadvantaged contexts. In defending the moral principle of unity, young people are not only acting upon social identification with their group, but a notion of social relations that include the interpersonal moral obligation of looking after the wellbeing and integrity of the collective one is a part of.

The focus on the shared meanings of peace provided further insights into the criteria of righteousness and desirability that youngsters use to navigate and regulate social relations. Chapter 3 revealed that YPB work with a model of social relations that foreground the importance of carrying for the integrity and wellbeing of the person, through social relations that entail emotional closeness and intense sociability (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2013). Chapter 3 showed that the group norms are about respecting others. By this, youngsters mean respecting the individual's

integrity, including rights and equality considerations, and also a respect for ideas, preferences, and opinions even when these may be different from theirs.

These criteria of righteousness and desirability about social relations were, like those from violent groups, applied outside the confines of the youth group. By this they referred not only to how social relations should be between members of the group, but how social relations ought to be in general. Young people belonging to non-violent groups call this “peacebuilding”. Their framing of peacebuilding echoes previous work on civic society participation in transitional societies, including Colombia, where peacebuilding is defined as the work of building the interpersonal conditions in which people can live together without violence (Pearce, 2007). Their actions prioritise the immediate surroundings, where interactions occur, over the many other strategies that exist to build peace in these societies (Rettberg, 2013)

A prime example of the former is the group’s goal of “transforming ways of relating”. It sought to change social relations in the community grounded on the principle of respect for other individuals. This notion of respect encompasses not only the individual’s physical integrity but also her preferences, opinions, and points of view. Group members take the principle of harm to mean not only physical harm but also transgressions to preferences, options and desires of other individuals. Therefore, social relations entail the moral obligation of looking after the integrity and wellbeing of the individual, stressing the individual’s autonomy, preferences, and points of view in addition to physical integrity. In a broader sense, their peacebuilding work becomes a counter-performative set of actions to the violent actions in their community (Pearce, 2007).

We know that the youth group is a relevant socialisation space where adolescents can explore different ways to interact, socialise, and relate to others (Harris, 1995). The focus on criteria of righteousness and desirability applied to social relations in the youth group contributes by showing crucial differences in the youths’ conceptions of how social relations ought to be, which in turn influences how youths engage with others and with the youth group itself. The evidence presented in this research work bring up qualitative differences behind the “double-edged” outcome of “sense of belonging”, an outcome of the peer group that has been identified to predict both adaptive and non-adaptive developmental outcomes as evidenced by

research work on gangs and positive youth development groups (Iwasaki, 2016; Klein, 2006; Thornberry et al., 2003). The studies presented here show how affiliation, i.e. sense of belonging, to a youth group may vary qualitatively according to models of social relations and expansions of the territories of the self, involving different moral obligations among adolescents who belong to violent and non-violent groups. These differences were made accessible by the focus of the PhD on meaning-making and participation in the youth group, and through the comparative methodological approach that afforded the possibility of contrasting types of youth group and degrees of involvement with the youth group.

The systematic comparison of criteria of desirability and standards of preferences as they matter for human development is the hallmark of the cultural psychological approach to development (Brice-Heath, 1996; Goodnow et al., 1995; Jensen, 2011; Miller, Wice, & Goyal, 2018; Shweder et al., 2007). Through its view of the youth group as a system of shared meanings and participation, the research presented in this PhD unearthed variations in the criteria of desirability and standards of preference observable at the level of the youth group pertaining models of social relations. These differences cling on differential understandings of one's moral obligations to one's group. These differential understandings become evident in how youths make sense of peace, violence, and also in how they reason practically about violence. These differential understandings that can contribute to explain the variation in individual-level outcomes within a disadvantaged environment within one particular region of the world -Latin America- that is highly relational, and where human connectedness, emotional and interpersonal closeness are privileged (Fitch, 1990; Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2013; Rodríguez et al., 2014).

The differences in models of social relations reported here open important new avenues of research. Cultural psychological work makes a distinction between three ethics that can help to understand variations in moral outlooks across cultural groups. These are the ethics of autonomy, community, and divinity (Shweder et al., 2003). The ethics of autonomy are centred around justice and harm issues and its organising principle is a view of the individual as autonomous, and as a preference structure. Interpersonal or community-oriented moralities share a conceptualisation of the self as part of a larger interdependent social structure and are centred around

enforceable interpersonal obligations that find moral force through the expansion of the moral domain from justice and harm concerns to duty-based moral codes. Their organising principle is a view of the self by its defining roles, duties, or position in society. Lastly, the ethics of divinity relies on a conceptualisation of the self as a spiritual entity connected to some sacred, pure or natural order of things and where spiritual concerns are entangled with concerns with justice and caring (Jensen, 2011; Miller, 1994; Shweder et al., 2003).

Our findings call for a more direct exploration of role-based, socially enforceable, interpersonal obligations in the context of the youth group, particularly among youths who belong to violent groups, beyond the findings reported here about the moral obligation of safeguarding the wellbeing and integrity of one's group. Our emphasis on violence and peace to infer relational models foregrounded harm and justice concerns, which allowed our exploration of the variations in the understandings of what constitutes harm, and the interrelationship between the territories of the self and social relations (Miller, 2010). Yet, this same focus prevents a more direct exploration of interpersonal moralities, focused on role-based enforceable interpersonal obligations (Miller, 1994). Interpersonal moralities have been described in non-Western cultures, such as India, Japan, and China (Kuwahara, 2004; Miller, 1994) and have also been studied in contexts of disadvantage across cultures, and within the West (Arnett, Ramos, & Jensen, 2001). Interpersonal moralities vary according to the meaning systems emphasized in different cultural groups and more research on these variations is needed (Miller, 1994). The empirical studies of the PhD unearthed the importance attributed to roles (such as group member, son or daughter) among youngsters who belong to both, violent and non-violent groups. It would be important to investigate in more depth whether the role obligations of group membership observed in these studies entail interpersonal role-based obligations and to study the similarities and differences across members of violent and non-violent groups.

Overall, our studies contribute by showing that the criteria of righteousness and desirability about social relations are shared and understood by members of the youth group. Equally important, they show that the models of social relations vary between youngsters in the same local world according to the type of youth group

they belong to (i.e. violent or non-violent groups) and by their degree of involvement with the youth group. These findings show the rich and diverse representational fields that are to be found in contexts of disadvantage and the need to de-homogenise the notion of “context of adversity” in developmental studies. Doing so will help to increase our understanding of variation in adolescent developmental outcomes in such contexts.

6.2.2. Youths self-positioning in relation to the context of disadvantage

Research on adolescent development in violent, disadvantaged, or post-conflict environments is typically framed within the clinical approach and focuses on issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder and the long term consequences of the exposure to violence among young people (Daiute, 2010). However, the clinical approach does not fully capture people’s experience of violence because it overemphasises symptoms while overlooking essential aspects of personhood, development, and meaning-making of the social world among non-clinical populations (Summerfield, 1999). In an effort to enrich our understanding of adolescent development in such contexts, a growing body of research has started to approach young people as agents who make sense of and act upon the social world they encounter, moving away from views that portray them as victims only (Daiute, 2016b, 2016a; Lucić, 2016; Zuilkowski, Collet, Jambai, Akinsulure-Smith, & Betancourt, 2016).

While this comprises a big step forward in the study of adolescent development in contextual disadvantage, this work is mostly based on interventions with young people designed by researchers working under a key assumption; that meaning-making is a cultural tool that *necessarily* aids resilience. This is a normative assumption that conflates processes of sense making about the social world with the process of resilience (Hammack, 2010; Recchia & Wainryb, 2011). Interventions designed to help young people develop narratives and make sense of violence, war, and political turmoil can be tools to promote resilience. However, the normativeness of the assumption excludes the meaning-making of young people who would not typically qualify as resilient, including youngsters who belong to gangs, and their elaboration of issues that fall outside the category of adaptive development, such as the shared understandings of the use of violence.

When put side by side, the group level understandings of peace and violence studied in this PhD reveal remarkable differences in how youths represent the social world and how they position themselves in relation to the context of disadvantage where they live. The thinking frameworks that youngsters develop and employ in making sense of the social world become “the building blocks for how they eventually position themselves in the world, become citizens and understand their relation to the larger society” (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2013). Through participation in the cultural community that is the youth group, adolescents develop an understanding of themselves, as evidenced by the findings of the connections between participation in peacebuilding and possible selves in chapter 3. They also develop an understanding of themselves in relation to the social world, and their own capacity to shape or change it (Flanagan, 2003; Kirshner, 2009; Rogoff, 2003b).

In many ways, the group level understandings of peace in Chapter 3 refer to evaluations of the social world as it *ought to be*. Through participation in peacebuilding, guided by the group’s goals, youngsters progressively develop a critical appraisal of the social world, guided by the group monitor and by their fellow group members. The elaboration of meaning about the construction of peaceful relationships and peaceful communities (i.e. peacebuilding) involved that youth identified social problems they were willing to engage with, assess their sources, and engage in critical meta-reflections about what the problem is and how to go about trying to solve it. Very importantly, participation in the peacebuilding activities enabled youths to draw a connection between critical appraisal and action, framed by the group’s shared ideas about the world they want (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Rapa, Diemer, & Bañales, 2018).

The critical appraisal of the social world tied to action can be instrumental in contexts of disadvantage. A large body of evidence indicates that a critical appraisal of the social world increases young people’s sense of agency, and their motivation and ability to identify and act on societal problems (Benson, 2003; Iwasaki, 2016; Kirshner, 2009; Lerner, 2004; Lerner et al., 2005; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). This body of research along with the findings in Chapter 3 reveal the close relationship between young people’s representation of the social world as it ought to be and their

own positioning in relation to the context of disadvantage where they live (Jovchelovitch et al., 2013).

The peacebuilding goal of “keeping youth outside the cycle of violence” in Chapter 3 is a prime example of this. This goal was firmly anchored in a view of young people as capable of resisting violent actors in the community and as capable of deciding to opt out from the cycle of violence. Further, group members portrayed the engagement in violence by young people in the community as the result of a mistake, and not as the necessary outcome of experiencing marginalisation. In contrast, young people belonging to violent groups described themselves and others as engaging in violence as a matter of fact, describing multiple ways in which they use violence instrumentally, and the various strategies they employ to deal with violence in everyday life (Chapter 4).

The portrayal of young people as capable of choosing not to engage in violence, to opt out, denotes a positioning of themselves as “engaged with” but symbolically “split from” the disadvantaged context and the violence it entails. In the case of the youths belonging to YPB, the content created through participation in peacebuilding activities supported the development of possible selves that were coherent with the group aims of working to build peaceful social relationships and communities. This aligns with previous research showing the positive effect of youth organising on adolescent development (Flanagan et al., 2011; Iwasaki, 2016; Kirshner, 2009; Lerner, 2004) and suggest the youth group as a cultural community where young people transform through their ongoing participation in it, which in turn contributes to change the broader socio-cultural environment where youths develop (Flanagan, 2003; Kirshner, 2009; Rogoff, 1995, 2003b), showing how individual and cultural communities mutually create each other.

The findings of the PhD contribute by showing that the creation of group level understandings of peace through participation in the youth group enables the opening up of a space where young people can develop ideas about the world they want and, in doing so, develop ideas of who they can be and what their community can be. The evaluations of the social world created in the context of the youth group allow them to question the taken-for-granted link between poverty and violence, and the default expectations of them as “at-risk youth” with no other future than poverty,

marginalisation, and criminality. Meaning-making within the youth group in contexts of disadvantage can refer to the world “as is” but also to the world as “I want it to be” and in doing so, help delineate young people’s own positioning in relation to the context of disadvantage where they live. This differentiation is necessary for a more accurate understanding of the role played by shared processes of meaning-making about the social world in adolescent development under contextual adversity.

6.2.3. Remarks on gender and violence sensemaking

Violence sensemaking cut across the three empirical studies of the PhD. Violence, specifically violent behaviour, is generally studied in a way that accounts for gender effects. This is because one of the most consistent findings across studies and disciplines is that violent behaviour differs by gender. Men behave more violently than women and act violently more frequently (Copping, 2017; Krug et al., 2002; WHO, 2002). The former is particularly true in the case of violence aimed at causing interpersonal harm, as men are more likely than women to perpetrate virtually all types of interpersonal violence, including murder, assault, rape, and intimate partner violence (Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Fleming, Gruskin, Rojo, & Dworkin, 2015).

In light of this evidence, social scientists have pointed to gender roles, gender norms, and the social construction of masculinity to explain gender effects in violent behaviour (Bosson, Vandello, Burnaford, Weaver, & Arzu Wasti, 2009; Fleming et al., 2015; Vandello & Bosson, 2013). In most societies, social constructions of masculinity reward men's embracement of hierarchy, power, and aggression (Fleming et al., 2015). As a result, men are seen as more masculine when they use violence and exert power, while women are more feminine when they are submissive (Pearce, 2007). In the case of marginalised young men, studies on masculinity propose that men will perpetrate violence against other men and against women to gain, maintain, or avoid losing status and power, as these are the markers of a "real man" (Connell, 2001; Sherriff, 2007). In the particular case of gangs, studies have documented in detail the ganging process and its deep dependence on the performance of violence across many societies (Bourgois, 2003; Castillo Berthier & Jones, 2009; Thornberry et al., 2003; Vigil, 1988; Zubillaga, 2009b). In

Colombia, Baird (2015, 2017) has documented how chronic exclusion can generate a sense of emasculation among marginalised men. This emasculation would lead youngsters to find alternative means of becoming "successful men" by embracing the violent practices of the gang.

Given this research, some remarks on the role of gender in the evidence presented in this PhD are granted. It is relevant to highlight that the samples in the three studies were generally balanced by gender. In Chapter 4, there were no differences between female and male participants in their shared understandings of violence. Male and female participants defined violence in roughly similar terms and attributed violence to similar causes. The only exception were the descriptions of the strategies to deal with violence, as male participants provided most of that content. Unfortunately, our sample was not large enough to run comparisons by gender in the analysis of moral reasoning about violence. In Chapter 5, we controlled for gender in the multivariate models of practical reasoning about violence by degree of gang involvement. Based on these two elements, gender would not seem to have a noticeable impact on how study participants make sense of violence. While this may sound counter-intuitive at first, it is indeed highly consistent with previous studies on moral violence showing that gender has no impact on how people reason morally about violence (Rai, Valdesolo, & Graham, 2017). This lack of difference between men and women is reasonable to expect if we assume that the righteousness of violence is grounded in moral motives that are shared by the members of a cultural community.

This point is noteworthy and highlights the benefits of expanding the psychological study of violence from research focused on violent behaviour to approaches that focus on how (young) people make sense of violence. All of the empirical studies in this dissertation focused on how young people make sense of the social world, social relationships, and themselves, and sought to have them describe and explain their reasoning about violence rather than measuring violent behaviour. Granted, the analysis of the role of gender was not the focus of the PhD, and I encourage and have planned further work on this specific issue. These early indications of small or absent gender effects in how young people make sense of violence in disadvantaged contexts are an invitation to consider in more detail the complex relationship

between what people think and do, as it applies to the problem of violence and violent behaviour.

The widely documented fact that men are more likely than women to behave violently (Krug et al., 2002; WHO, 2015) does not necessarily mean that men and women differ in their evaluations of the circumstances that merit the righteous use of violence. This highlights the overwhelming imbalance between studies seeking to understand the reproduction of violence, and their bias towards studying masculinities. Women's participation in the reproduction of violence is not sufficiently explored in the literature (Baird, 2009; Zubillaga, 2009). If men and women were to have similar evaluations about the righteous use of violence within a given cultural community, then researchers need to study more systematically the role of women in the reproduction of violent behaviour. Without necessarily having to act violently, women can encourage the exercise of (righteous) violence on the part of men; be he a partner, a son, a friend, or a fellow gang member according to her evaluations and expectations of when violence ought to be exercised.

This possibility opens new avenues of research on the reproduction of violence in both disadvantaged and other contexts, with attention paid to how violent behaviour among men may be induced by women's reasoning about the righteous use of violence in a given cultural community. Gender has a clear effect on violent behaviour, but moral and practical understandings of the use of violence would seem to be more related to cultural community than to gender.

6.3. Contributions

Previous psychological research on disadvantaged young people has often compared them to middle-income populations, which has contributed to our understanding of the negative impacts of poverty on multiple developmental outcomes (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Devenish et al., 2017; Dickerson & Popli, 2016; Eamon, 2001; Fry et al., 2017). Variations in outcomes within disadvantaged contexts, however, are less well understood. One way of exploring this variation has been to focus on micro-contexts of development such as the family and the school and analyse the mediation role of the youth group in shaping social and psychological adjustment and maladjustment among disadvantaged adolescents. By design, these studies use a

thin conceptualisation of the youth group that runs counter to work showing the youth group as a rich representational field, where youth co-construct shared understandings of the social world and themselves (Fine, 2012; Flanagan, 2003; Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000).

As shown in the empirical studies of the dissertation, the study of value-laden group-level understandings yields nuanced descriptions of how disadvantaged young people reason about violence and think of their future selves. The studies indicate that these outcomes vary by the type of youth group individuals belong to and by their degree of involvement with it. In this section, I turn to elaborate further on the contributions of each of the empirical studies employing evidence from disadvantaged contexts in Colombia.

Chapter 3 contributes to the body of evidence with the discovery of an overlap of the shared understandings of peace and young people's elaborations of hoped for possible selves. These hoped for possible selves reflect young people's evaluations of what entails a desirable and valuable future self. Researchers in the field of positive youth development have identified the need for more evidence and theory on how young people learn, adopt, and apply prosocial norms in the context of youth organising and civic engagement groups (Geldhof et al., 2014; Siu et al., 2012). The study contributes with a focus on guided participation, showing how group-level understandings of peace contain guidance on how social relations should be conducted and on one's positioning in relation to the disadvantaged context, as discussed in the previous section. The constant movement in and out of peacebuilding roles and the deployment of skills framed by the shared understandings of peace are one possible mechanism for the adoption of social norms on the part of young people participating in civic engagement groups.

More generally, the study findings contribute to the gang literature. The process of guided participation, co-construction of group goals, and evaluations of desirable and valuable possible selves should operate in similar ways in the case of youths associated to gangs. Research on the "ganging process" has described in detail how it is anchored in shared understandings of what it means to be a successful young person in a specific local world (Baird, 2015, 2017; Bourgois, 2003; Zubillaga, 2009b). This literature emphasises the role of the political economy of violence as

well as the weight of larger structural and historical factors in shaping the ganging process. Yet, the socio-cultural psychological process by which the ganging process occurs, including how shared value-laden understandings are adopted by gang members, is not adequately described. The identification of the overlaps between the gang goals and the evaluations of desirable present-oriented and future-oriented representations of the self could feed into interventions aiming to prevent gang involvement by focusing on the evaluations of desirability about future selves.

The cross-sectional design of the study reported in chapter 3 did not account for the role of self-selection in the study findings. Research with civic engagement groups and gangs alike points to self-selection playing a role in the group affiliation decisions of young people. Yet, studies show that self-selection is not sufficient to explain many of the outcomes associated with civic engagement groups and gangs (Barnes et al., 2010; Dahl & Abdelzadeh, 2017; Quintelier, 2013; Thornberry et al., 2003). This body of research proposes an enhancement theory where both self-selection and socialisation processes within the group contribute to outcomes associated with gangs and civic engagement groups. This this caveat in mind, Chapter 3 contributes with analytical tools to study how understandings of right and desirable may permeate not only present-oriented representations of the self but future-oriented content in the form of hoped for possible selves in different types of youth groups.

Chapter 4 showed differences in the group-level understandings of violence between peacebuilding groups and gangs. The juxtaposition between the two allowed the discovery of a significant and unexpected difference between these two groups. While all young people describe a social world as comprised by individuals who can be victims or agents of violence, only gang members describe a social world where *the group* is a social entity that can be a victim or agent of violence. Additionally, gang members considered the use of violence to defend their group to be righteous. This view was justified by the moral motive of unity, which mandates that one protects and defends the wellbeing of one's collective.

This finding is significant for the literature on violence and social identity. We know that collective violence and social identity are mutually catalysing processes. Studies with street gangs (Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012) and football gangs (Guilianotti,

Booney, & Hepworth, 2013) have shown that gang socialisation turns individuals group-oriented, which is a powerful force for the exercise of violence against members of other groups (Hennigan & Spanovic, 2012; Vigil, 1988). Conversely, research with ex-combatants shows that the enactment of collective violence increases the identification with the violent group (Littman, 2018; Littman & Paluck, 2015). Because these associations are studied from a social identity perspective, people belonging to the collective are understood to operate under depersonalised representations of the self (i.e. a perception of the self as an interchangeable exemplar of a social category) (Brewer & Yuki, 2010). This is a representation of the self that renders violent behaviour less agentic (Elchereth & Reicher, 2017).

The findings in Chapter 4 are significant to this literature because they show that gang members experience the violence they use to defend their group as righteous violence justified by the unity moral motive. This implies that the violence used to defend one's collective is agentic and has a purpose anchored in moral evaluations about how social relations ought to be (Fiske & Rai, 2015; Ginges, 2019; Rai & Fiske, 2011). If this finding is correct, then violence exerted to defend one's group is not solely the result of social conformity guided by social identity. However, interventions with gang-involved young people aiming to decrease violent behaviour do not account for this. Current interventions on violent behaviour tend to be based on an understanding of violence as impulsive or instrumental. As a result, these efforts train young people to "slow-down" and think for a second before reacting aggressively (Heller et al., 2015). This approach may be effective in preventing impulsive and instrumental violence, but if the violence to defend one's collective is experienced as moral, then slowing down will not necessarily prevent violent behaviour motivated by the moral motive of unity. Further research should explore the effectiveness of targeting the unity moral motive in the prevention of gang-related violence.

The findings are also significant to the study of moral reasoning of young people in violent and impoverished contexts. Previous research with violence-exposed young people asserts that this population struggles to see themselves and others as moral agents. The decreased moral agency among youths is attributed to the lack of

ownership of their harmful actions and a decreased capability to represent theirs and other people's internal motives, reasons, and emotions when committing harmful acts (Posada & Wainryb, 2008; Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2010). The shared understandings of violence reported in Chapter 4 challenge this argument. Members of peacebuilding groups and gangs conveyed complex understandings of their own and other people's internal motives, reasons, and emotions when committing harmful acts. As we now know this meaning is coherent with processes of moral and practical reasoning about violence in daily life. The notion of moral agency relies heavily on how individuals come to recognize their harmful actions as being initiated and guided by their own reasons, beliefs, preferences, and emotions. These recognition of mental states are used to organise moral transgressions and moral experiences (Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2010). The findings in Chapter 4 contribute with in-depth descriptions of young people's views and value-laden evaluations of the social world, social relations, and themselves. These descriptions can improve our understanding of moral agency in violent and impoverished contexts by providing more nuanced accounts of their understandings of their own and others' harmful actions.

Chapter 5 shows differences in the practical reasoning about violence of at-risk young people by degree of gang membership. The study reveals differences in the practical reasoning pertaining to general violence (i.e. violent behaviour, victimisation, and endorsement of violence in self-defence) and the practical reasoning of violence with collectivistic undertones (i.e. violence to defend one's group). In line with previous research, we find that general violence increases with degree of gang involvement. Yet, violence with collectivistic undertones differentiates youngsters who join a gang from those who do not, despite having close links to one. These findings contribute to psychological studies of gang members by showing that violence is not a binary outcome. The conceptualisation and measurement of violence need to account for motives and qualities of violence, as they appear throughout the process of gang association and eventual gang membership. The findings are also significant for gang studies, particularly those using ethnographic approaches to the gang, because they demonstrate that gang membership is not binary. An emphasis on comparisons across the gradient of gang

involvement can inform about the violence motives that are specific to the gang and those shared by other young people in the same context.

The approach used in this PhD contributes to the ecological and systems approaches to the study of peer group by integrating the study of processes of meaning-making and participation in the youth group to the study of individual-level socio-cognitive outcomes (i.e. positive selves, moral and practical reasoning about violence).

Processes of meaning-making and guided participation have been studied in relation to individual-level outcomes among middle-class young people (Fine, 2012; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1995; Wenger, 2000) however they remain a rare approach to study the case of disadvantaged young people (For an exception see Brice-Heath, 1996). This piece of research showed that value-laden meaning-making processes in impoverished and violent contexts can be studied at the level of the youth group.

The exploration of shared understandings of morally relevant themes (peace and violence) across cultural communities and their links to individual socio-cognitive outcomes revealed the youth group as a context of the mind. The studies of the dissertation illustrate how group and individual-level outcomes are linked by taken for granted assumptions, norms, values, and conceptual presuppositions (Arnett et al., 2001; Jensen, 2011) shared by the members of the youth group. The approach used in this research contributes with conceptual tools to deepen the study of psychological development in context of disadvantage with a focus on (sub)cultures in contexts of disadvantage.

The methodological contribution entails the comparative approach by type of group (i.e. violent and non-violent groups) and the comparisons by degree of involvement with the youth group (i.e. degree of gang membership). Comparisons remain rare in youth studies, gang studies, and in the positive youth development literature, yet they are highly needed (Klein, 2006). The PhD design entailed both qualitative and quantitative comparisons, which enabled comparisons between group-level outcomes (i.e. group-level understandings of violence) and comparisons of individual-level socio-cognitive outcomes by type of youth group and degree of involvement with it. The comparative approach contributes to gang studies and positive youth development literature by demonstrating the usefulness of comparing youth groups in addition to the focus on “positive” and “negative” groups.

Comparisons reveal what is common across types of youth groups, which in this case is the co-construction of value-laden shared understandings of relevant aspects of the social world, social relationships and themselves. At the same time, comparisons help to identify crucial differences in these shared understandings and how they connect to individual-level outcomes.

Young people growing up in poor, violent, and stigmatised environments co-construct complex understandings of the social world around them, including representations of core themes, of social relationships, and ideas about how the social world ought to be. These findings stand in stark contrast to psychological portrayals of the poor as having “depleted mental functioning and poverty as tapping out people’s mental reserves” (Vohs, 2013, p. 969). The studies in this PhD reveal that far from being a uniform, macro-level variable, disadvantaged contexts are complex and diverse representational fields, where individuals engage in shared processes of meaning-making, producing shared understandings, practices, and valuations of the world that populate the social sphere and mediate the developmental process in the same way they do in any other context (Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2015; Jovchelovitch, 2007; Leung & Shek, 2011). The evidence presented in this PhD exemplifies this richness and diversity and contributes to improving our conceptual and empirical approaches to study adolescent development in contexts of adversity.

6.4. Limitations and future directions

The research work presented in this PhD has a number of limitations, which can help delineate opportunities for future research. Because each of the empirical chapters contains a description of the limitations of each particular study, in this section I refer to more general limitations pertaining the design of the PhD and on describing the avenues of future inquiry these help inspire.

A first limitation to consider is the cross-sectional design employed in the research. This design prevents us from exploring questions of self-selection to the youth group in relation to the measured individual outcomes. As discussed before, youth groups select members across pre-existing individual differences, but research work has also established that the youth group plays an enhancement role of baseline

individual strengths and vulnerabilities (Barnes et al., 2010; Thornberry et al., 2003). Future research should employ a longitudinal design to parse out the role of self-selection and that of group socialisation in relation to the outcomes reported here, possible selves, moral reasoning and practical reasoning in relation to violence. Our studies contribute by providing an in-depth account of shared meanings that emerge within the youth group and their connection with moral and practical reasoning about violence, and by detailing how the development of possible selves among youths is connected to the process of participation in the youth group and to the content of group level understandings of peace.

Second, a fully symmetrical comparative design entailing the study of participation in the gang would have been ideal. While the design comprised qualitative interviews with youths from violent and non-violent groups, participant observation was carried out with the peacebuilding group only, which limits the extent to which meaningful comparisons could be done about participation in the youth group. Chapter 3 studied the process of participation in peacebuilding activities and how it enabled youths to enact new roles and skills guided by the group's peacebuilding goals. It is expected that participation in the gang enables young people to engage in new roles and use skills guided by the gangs' goals, just like it does in the peacebuilding group. This limitation was addressed by drawing heavily from ethnographic work on the topic of gangs and the "ganging process" in addition to psychological literature on gang involved youths to produce the studies' research questions and hypotheses. The research work presented here contrasts with and contributes to research work in mainstream developmental psychology that usually relies on research work within its own disciplinary field and methods.

A first interesting avenue of future research pertains the question of comparing possible selves among members of violent and non-violent groups. I have started addressing this question in an ongoing research project, where I am utilizing interview data to compare the content of possible selves among members of violent and non-violent groups as well as the length of the time span they consider when projecting themselves into the future. Research on poverty and decision making processes has shown that many of the suboptimal decisions and behaviours associated with low-income populations are characterized by a preferential focus on

the present over the future (Heller et al., 2015; Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2017). Given this evidence, my research seeks to determine if any differences can be observed at the level of the youth group in relation to the temporal orientation towards the present vs. the future in the same context of disadvantage. In addition, the project seeks to identify similarities and differences in the content of possible selves of youths who belong to violent and non-violent groups.

Another important question for future research pertains the youngsters who transition between violent and non-violent groups. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the realization that some youngsters belonged to both, violent and non-violent groups inspired the comparative design of the dissertation. My next research project entails an in-depth comparison of the five youngsters who were found to transition between violent and non-violent groups. These young people fall into the category of group “associates” to both following the distinction made in Chapter 5, moving in the grey zone between both types of groups. Therefore, they comprise an important case study to explore what do youths learn by belonging to each type of group and how this double affiliation translates into the youths’ possible selves, moral reasoning and practical reasoning about violence.

Following an ecological logic, another avenue of future research pertains the connections between the models of social relations held by members of violent and non-violent groups and those held by their families. The unity moral motive was found to be relevant to both, moral reasoning about violence and practical reasoning about violence. Because the unity motive from the youths’ perspectives pertained not only their gang but also their family, it is important to explore the influence of the family in socializing young people to embrace this motive. Future research should explore the parallels and connections between the models of social relations between the family and the youth group a young person belongs to. This would further contribute to understand the interaction between the family and the youth group, two fundamental ecologies in the development process of adolescents.

Lastly, future research will explore how other aspects of the disadvantage context, viewed as a dense representational field, shape the youths’ understandings of their future selves. This research will entail mapping the socio-cultural tracks of development available to youths in disadvantaged communities (Hundeide, 2001,

2005) and how youths position themselves in relation to them. Tracks of development “are there already, before the person started, as part of a historical and socio-cultural structure, into which he or she has to find his/her place, directions and opportunities” (Hundeide, 2005, p. 242). Yet, a fundamental part of understanding how tracks of development interact with youths’ understandings of their future selves involves understandings which of these tracks of development are perceived as psychologically available and coherent with the self. Youths have a rich understanding of available tracks of development based in their experience and the socially shared representations about disadvantaged adolescents such as themselves (Howarth, 2006; Jovchelovitch, 2015). Empirically, this can be grasped through a focus on the youths’ own perspectives and meta-perspectives (i.e. what I think the other thinks of me) (Gillespie, 2012; Gillespie & Cornish, 2010) about the tracks of development in their own context, in addition to the reported perspectives of people with whom youths are socially engaged, such as parents or teachers and wider societal representations about “at risk” youths. Various aspects of this question will be addressed in a two-year, funded study with adolescents growing up in five Colombian towns that were hardly hit by the political conflict.

Final remarks

The starting point of this dissertation was a deep interest and motivation to understand young people’s experiences growing up in poor, violent, and stigmatized contexts using an approach that would emphasize the often overlooked variation that exists in adolescent outcomes in disadvantaged contexts, while highlighting a view of contexts of disadvantage as rich and diverse representational fields, where meaning-making processes, shared understandings, practices, and valuations of the world are to be found.

In addition to the empirical, methodological, and theory contributions produced by this approach, the perspective taken in this research points to the inaccuracy of the deficit approach when studying young people growing up in contexts of disadvantage (Lerner, 2015) by showing that young people who experience adversity are relational, creative, and diverse. While it would be politically and epistemologically undesirable to deny that poverty, violence, and adversity stunt human lives, communities facing disadvantage are far from being a uniform context,

and young people growing up in these circumstances are far from being a uniform batch; this needs more attention and recognition not only in the psychological literature, but in how research and findings about “at risk” youths is communicated and circulated in the society. Messages about disadvantaged youths as youngsters with no other future than violence or crime add to the social burden these young people already face in growing up in harsh circumstances.

Lenses focusing on poverty as a macro-contextual variable fail to capture, let alone explain, the wealth of resources and strategies for living that are to be found in contexts of disadvantage. The research work presented in this dissertation provides a systematic approach to young peoples’ shared understandings of peace and violence within the youth group and how these connect to individual level outcomes in vulnerable contexts. In doing so, the research allows a closer view of the youths moral and practical reasoning about violence and peace in everyday contexts, which can in turn aid to design interventions and policies that build on the experiences, actions and knowledge that youth themselves are creating in these contexts.

The approach proposed here, although distinctively psychological, is in synchrony with ethnographic accounts of day to day life in communities that face the threat of everyday violence. The work conducted in the context of this PhD is a provocation to consider, research, and theorise the plurality and richness of meanings emerging within the diverse youth groups that are to be found in contexts of disadvantage, and that emerge within the same macro-context of violence and poverty. The youth groups theorized here represent instances of resistance and instances of reproduction of the violence in such contexts, a complexity that that invites much more work to inform how to best facilitate both, individual and social development.

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Appendix 1: Instruments study 1

Some questions about you

1. What is your date of birth? ____/____/____
Day Month Year
2. How old are you? _____
3. Are you? Male ☐ Female ☐
4. What year are you at school? _____
5. What school do you attend? _____
6. What shift do you attend? Day ☐ Evening ☐
7. How long ago did you join Young peacebuilders? (Number of years or months)
Years ☐ Months ☐
8. Are you a member of other youth groups?
Yes ☐ What group? _____
No ☐
9. Do you work? Yes ☐ Hours per week? _____
No ☐
10. What is the monthly household income? (approximately)
- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Less than COP\$ 180,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Between COP\$180.001 and COP\$544,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Between COP\$ 544,001 and COP\$ 1088,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Between COP\$ 1088,001 and COP\$ 1631,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| COP\$ 1631,001 or higher | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Interview guide

SCHOOL AND LEISURE TIME

- What grade are you in school?
 - If no school = When did you leave school?
 - If no school = Why did you leave the school?
- In your opinion, what is good about school?
- In your opinion, what is bad about school?
- Is it important to go to School, why do children need school?

FAMILY AND FINANCIAL SITUATION

- Who is your family?
 - Who do you live with?
- Can you tell me a bit about how is the relationship with your family?
- Is there any significant problem in your family?
 - If conflict: How do you feel about this?
- Do you help at home (financially)?
- Who supports the family (financially)?
- Do you work?
 - What do you do?
 - Do you like the work you do?

SELF AND NEIGHBORHOOD

- How long have you lived here?
- How is it like to live here?
- How is it like to grow up here? (As a child and as an adolescent)
- What makes you proud of Barranca?
- What bothers you the most about Barranca?
- Do you feel safe/unsafe living here?
- What places make you feel safe?
- Have you lost someone to violence?

YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS

- How is it like to be part of this group?
- Why did you join the group? [Story]
- What was going on in your life when you decided to join?
- How would your life be if the group had not been there?
- What does the group do? What do you guys do?
- What is the best thing about the group?
- What have you learned in the group?
- Have you changed in any way since you joined the group?
- Does the group help you with anything? What is it?
- Can you name one thing that works very well in the group?
- What does not work well in the group?
- There may be youngsters who don't want to join the group, why do you think that is?
- What are the "réplicas"? [workshops with peers and groups]

- Please describe to me what do you do at the “réplicas”
- Do you like them? Why?

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

- Who do you want to be when you grow up?
 - Do you know someone with these characteristics?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- Can you identify the single person, group of persons, or organisation/institution that has or have had the greatest influence on who you are?
 - Please describe this person, group, or organisation
 - Please describe the way in which they have had an impact on you.
- When you have a problem, do you ask for help?
 - Who helps you?
- Where are your friends from? (Church, school, work, sports team, community)
- Do you have friends who are not from here?
 - Who are they?
 - What do you do together?

THE FUTURE

- How will your future be like?
 - Has your membership to YPB changed how you see the future in any way?
- What would you like to be in the future?
 - Has YPB influenced this in any way?
- What are your fears in relation to the future?
- What is your biggest dream?
- Is there anything in the way of this dream? What is it?
- What motivates you to achieve your dreams?

Appendix 2: Thematic codebook interview data study 1

Code	Sub-code	Definition	Frequency	Datum example
Goals and strategies	Crowding out from violent groups	Descriptions of the group goal of preventing young people from joining gangs, football gangs, micro traffic of drugs or illicit activities	55	<i>"What we want is to get more youngsters to join our side, and make sure no one else joins the [political] conflict, the war, the drug trade. I think that is what defines our collective, our group".</i>
	Transforming violent ways of relating	Descriptions of the group goal of transforming one's own and others violent ways of relating to other people	68	<i>"We first learn basic concepts; for example, what gender violence is, [same with] peace, rights, and how all these are being violated. If you are clear on these concepts, you can pass them on to others who don't know about them, and they will in turn spread them on to other people and so on and so forth. This is how you create change and improve things. [you convey] that we should not ride roughshod over ourselves, that we should not always blame the government, if we change the individuals first, then change will grow on its own".</i>
	Strategies devised to keep young people outside the cycle of violence	Descriptions of how one prevents young people from joining gangs, football gangs, micro-traffic of drugs or illicit activities	40	<i>"To change the mates' mentality. Telling them, to come join us, helping them to change their thinking, showing them that not everything is about using drugs, using marihuana and hanging out in the park. Instead they can come here and learn about their rights. I first joined YPB because I wanted to learn all these things about my rights and keep myself out of the rough context you get here, if only for a couple of hours. Here you learn to defend youths' rights and you get to see a world that is different from the one you get on a daily basis</i>
	Strategies devised to transform violent ways of relating	Descriptions of how one transforms your own and others violent ways of relating	52	<i>We want a world with less poverty and less violence. How do you achieve that? Well, you do activities, you call people's attention, tell them 'look, there are youngsters who want peace, who don't want any more violence' and then you do the activities, the workshops, you reach out to other youngsters, telling them 'look, we are a group of young people, we do this and that, we meet on these days, come join us'.</i>

Code	Sub-code	Definition	Frequency	Datum example
Participation	Skills			
	Listen to others	Listening and paying attention to other group members opinions, points, and concerns.	47	<i>Our rule here is respect. It is not like you come here and talk and talk, no. Everyone has something to bring to the table. Listen, and consider everyone's opinion.</i>
	Respects different points of view	Descriptions of situations where youngster accepts alternative points of view as valid, regardless of own point of view	10	<i>Each one of us (in the group) pushes for what he or she wants to do or for what they thinks is best, you know? Your vision of the group and the activities. You need to understand everyone, their point of view, because it is not just like the one who speaks the most is the best, right? Each one has something to offer.</i>
	Negotiation	Proposing, rejecting, or agreeing with other group members about activities, goals, or tasks	5	<i>Here you learn strategies to solve misunderstandings, when people want different things. I've learned what to do, you negotiate</i>
	Assertiveness	Descriptions about getting your point across in an effective manner	20	<i>There are things like assertive communication, and one has to know how to handle problems and how, even as a young person, know how to put a stop on a situation that is getting out of hands, know how to talk and work through problems by expressing your point of view.</i>
	Perspective taking	Descriptions that evidence perspective taking by thinking of other people's possible thoughts, emotions, motivations	9	<i>You prepare for the public campaign, what happens if you meet a "no" (talking about the plebiscite) you need to know why they want to vote no, think ahead, and have answers ready to make your point.</i>
	Critical thinking	Descriptions of pondering about a problem, seeking information and other people's opinion, looking at the problem from a different perspective,	35	<i>The exercise of thinking through problems together, is what allows that a community, a collective, a group of people, can ask itself, why is that this (issue), in this case using drugs, is wrong?</i>
	Individual agency	Descriptions of sense of agency in connection to the group	25	<i>This was the space where I felt I could contribute the most, from the place and the things I can do. I mean, I then learned that I can do more things, that I can communicate and convey things and put my ideas forward</i>
	Joint agency	Descriptions of collective agency in connection to the group	60	<i>When we do a public campaign, we are all there, together. All of us Young peacebuilders are there, sometimes some more pals from school join us, and we all say "NO to the war, we want peace!" and it is us, the young people, who are saying it and who can change things</i>
Roles				

Group leader	Descriptions of the experience of organising the group or implementing a peacebuilding activity	40	<i>We are scheduled to attend this event, so we are going. That's the first step, the monitor gives us the shield, but we need to get the sword by ourselves, and make the event happen. So we start, ok, brainstorm, this will be our message, we can use this or that image, we can put candles on the floor. And that's how you design the public campaign.</i>
Experienced member	Descriptions of guiding another member to lead the group	37	<i>So I explained to him, you can't just expect that the monitor tells you what to do. To me, it was an interesting experience, because after some time in the group, I got myself into the task of organising our meetings, so I would go "I want to lead our meeting next week" and no one would tell me what to do, I was the one in charge. Pick the topic, set things right so you generate interest and questions from the group, etc.</i>
Apprentice member	Descriptions of the learning process of the group dynamic	18	<i>At the beginning you don't quite know how it works but everyone here is very friendly. So they tell you that everyone is expected to say what they think, and that is how it works</i>
Spoke person of the group	Descriptions of the experience of representing the group in public campaigns, workshops, or with city authorities	11	<i>In that moment, you represent the group. I used to write the message down and read it on the microphone, but I've become more confident now. I like to tell people what we think.</i>
Role model to peers	Descriptions of being the referent for peers	67	<i>There is people who care about what I tell them, like there are some who don't care, you know? But yeah, they like to learn, and that one explains to them that the only solution to problems is not violence, you can also talk. It's not all about punches and insults.</i>
Role model to children	Descriptions of being a referent for children	56	<i>You may think "ah, this is only a game, children don't understand a thing" but really, kids understand everything, their brain is like a sponge and it stores information and grows. You can teach children values, values that will be good for them in the future, so they don't fall for an armed group. You can teach them by example. So yeah, I prefer to work with them, children.</i>
Activist	Descriptions of instances when one furthers the cause of peace publicly	46	<i>They [YPB] really helped me to be a leader. That is why I decided to go and talk to the regional director here in the city. I wanted to get involved, and learn how [the office for cultural affairs] works. It is useful to me because my thing is painting, the arts. I thought I could get myself known there and so I got involved. I got so involved that right now I am the sub-coordinator at the city level.</i>
Peacebuilder	Descriptions of discussions of group goals with others and descriptions of behaviors that build peace	29	<i>What I was trying to convey to present to these youngsters, well not present but have them realize themselves was that they own their time, their ideas, that people have the right to choose what to do with their life</i>

	Musician	Descriptions of playing the group's music	9	<i>Use the music, you know? Be a musician, the songs we composed here. Music reaches out to people, our lyrics make them think</i>
Code	Sub-code	Definition	Frequency	Datum example
Possible selves	Feared selves	Descriptions of the fears in relation to the future self	43	<i>Fears about my future? That I am no one in life, that I can't provide to my (future) family or that I can't help my (current) family, like not being able to help my dad or my mum with money.</i>
	Expected selves	Descriptions of what they want to be in the future, statements relate to realistic expectations, including plan B.	34	<i>Surgeon, but that is a really expensive career, and I know my dad does not have the money to pay it. I could also study something technical, a technical degree and pay for medical school myself. The technical degree would be on something about oil, a technician for an oil company</i>
	Hoped for selves	Descriptions of what they want to be in the future, statements relate to hopes and aspirations.	40	<i>I always say that my dream is to get a university degree. My big dream is to graduate from uni. and be an awesome engineer and help people. Maybe give them my knowledge as a gift, I don't know, share my knowledge somehow so to help the community. And also be comfortable economically speaking, I wish everyone would do well in life.</i>
	Valuation of possible self	Descriptions of who, what human being, they want to be in the future	52	<i>I want to be a coherent person. Someone who knows what she is doing and who knows how to work through problems without creating a conflict or making people feel bad. I mean, someone rational to face conflict as in "if this is for you, or not, or it is for me, well we can maybe work out a fair solution.</i>
	Who I want to be like	Statements that bring in another person as an example of who one wants to be in the future	44	<i>I want to be like them [group monitors] when I grow up. It is really wonderful to see how people can care so much about others, how they truly care for the problems others may have, that they don't think only of themselves, but think in the common good. I really like that they are like that; many people don't do that. Most people live their lives worried about their own problems, everything is "me", "me" and "me", and they think "If I'm fine, I don't care about the rest".</i>

Appendix 3: Thematic codebook observation data study 1

	Code	Definition	Operationalization	Peacebuilding activity*			
				GM	WC	WP	PC
Skills	Listens to others	Pays attention to other people's point of view and responds to it	Listens to group member	x			
			Listens to group monitor	x	x		
			Listens to community member				x
			Listens to a peer			x	
			Accepts suggestions for improvement	x			
	Respects different points of view	Acknowledges points of view that are different from his/her own	Recognizes different point of view	x	x	x	x
			Agrees to different point of view	x			
			Disagrees but acknowledges point of view	x		x	x
	Negotiation	Negotiates goals and task assignments with other group members	Proposes goals for activity	x			
			Proposes alternative goal for activity	x			
			Agrees to goals proposed by others	x			
			Proposes task	x			
			Agrees to tasks proposed by others	x			
	Assertiveness	Expresses point of view in a self-assured and confident way without being aggressive	Expresses points of view	x	x	x	x
			Expresses expectations	x	x	x	x
			Expresses feelings	x			
			Expresses desires	x			
			Affirms own/others rights		x	x	x
	Perspective taking	Considers actions and situations from the perspective of other individuals	Anticipates views of people with different political affiliation				x
			Explains actions from the actor's point of view	x			x
			Explains motivations from the actor's point of view	x			x
	Critical thinking	Analyses and evaluates issues in order to form an opinion	Seeks information to form an opinion	x	x	x	x
			Discusses information with other group members	x			
			Changes opinion based on new information	x			
			Questions stereotypes held by others	x	x	x	x
			Questions stereotypes held by self	x			
	Coordinated action	Acts in coordination with other group members	Performs assigned task	x	x	x	x
			Takes turns to complete a task	x	x	x	x
			Helps other to complete a task	x	x	x	x
			Takes turns to speak	x			
			Proposes action plan	x			
			Follows action plan	x	x	x	x

	Code	Definition	Operationalization	Peacebuilding activity*			
				GM	WC	WP	PC
Roles	Group leader	Takes the leading role to organise and implement a peacebuilding activity	Sets goals	x			
			Assigns tasks	x	x	x	x
			Keeps members accountable of assigned task	x	x	x	x
			Provides instructions to other members as needed	x	x	x	x
			Provides instructions to workshop participants		x	x	x
	Experienced member	Helps the group leader perform his/her role as needed	Provides instructions	x	x	x	x
			Helps to define goals	x			
			Helps to define tasks	x	x	x	x
			Explains task to another member	x	x	x	x
	Apprentice member	Learns tasks and procedures to organise and implement a peacebuilding activity	Shadows monitor	x	x	x	x
			Performs tasks with other members	x	x	x	x
			Observes tasks being performed	x			
			Conducts assigned task	x	x	x	x
	Spoke person of the group	Is in charge of conveying a message by YPB to external people	Takes the stage to communicate group's statement			x	x
			Talks to group / community leader on behalf of YPB				x
			Talks to city authority on behalf of YPB				x
	Peacebuilder	Takes actions against violence	Mediates conflict	x	x	x	x
			Treats others with respect	x	x	x	x
			Talks instead of fighting	x	x	x	x
			Discusses YPB goals with adolescents who use drugs			x	x
			Discusses YPB goals with adolescents who are in a gang			x	x
	Teacher	Teaches others new information or new points of view	Provides new information to children		x		x
			Guides children's play		x		
			Provides new information to peers			x	x
			Offers peers a different perspective on an issue			x	x
	Activist	Furtherers the cause of peace publicly	Starts discussions about violence and peace with adults				x
			Starts discussions about violence and peace with peers			x	
			Talks to authorities about violence and peace in the community				x
			Participates in demonstrations for peace				x

GM= Group meeting, WC= Workshop with children, WP= Workshop with peers, PC= Public campaign against violence

Appendix 4: Transcript of qualitative interview (excerpt) study 1

Interview: BA09

What is it that makes people identify with a youth group, with a community?

What makes a cohesive community?

I believe that when a group of people has a reason, it could be the same reason, it would be like... why some people are grouped in a collective because, well, in this case young peacebuilders, we are young people who want to take other young people out of the conflict, out of the war, drug addiction like all these problems. I think that is what makes for a community or a group of people. That they question the fact that some things are indeed wrong. That's what makes them work as a community, you know? Working as a community, as a collective, is what allows these things to become more real, maybe truer. It is like this has a bigger impact than the change propelled by one single person acting on her own. Because I feel that if you are in a place like, in general, if you are on planet earth, and if, I mean, what we are trying to achieve is that, in this case, the planet earth, is now being damaged by the problem of global warming, the important thing would be that lots of people had that in mind. If only Colombia, as one country, works to prevent global warming, well not to completely prevent it but to diminish it, it is only Colombia then it is less likely that global warming will be prevented. But if there are around 50-something countries working together, that is a different story. I don't know if my answer was right, I came up with a lot of thoughts.

That is great, thank you. And no, this is not about the answers being right or wrong, I am interested in understanding your own point of view.

I feel like I went off talking about other things (laughter).

As I was listening to you, I was wondering about the things you may have learned in the group. What have you learned in the group? Or maybe what are the most important things you learned in the group? Because you have been coming here for several years, right? How many years now?

The group was born like around 2011, yeah, towards the end of 2011. We were the first ones. That was like 3, 4 years ago, I don't know.

That is a long time. 4 years. What have you learned in the group?

Well, I believe that being... how I can explain this in a nutshell. I really feel that things here (in the group) were really about building understanding and knowledge. Then, it was like, through the peacebuilding workshops, and of course through the group meetings, everything that was generated in this space is very important. I feel that everything I learned was about knowledge, like, about many, many things. I could do a list of many things. They were super important and I think they came at the right time, because I was in a stage where I was about to graduate from highschool and, well, besides being in school, well, of course I had (free) time during the day when I would do nothing. Although in my case, I sought to generate alternative spaces, of course. But generally speaking, there was a lot of young people with a lot of free time in their hands. And so, for me, it was very important to learn what could I do with my free time. By then, we were trying to consolidate a music band. Now the band is much stronger, but it started here, in our heads. And well, here in the group. Let's say that, to some extent, the motivation resulting from allowing ourselves to dream made us unstoppable. Like, you have this idea that is a little crazy... because it is a very big idea, it was a long shot (setting up a music band). During that time, it was very important to be in the group because, to some extent, we learned here that the minute we stop dreaming, the band would stop to exist. If we stopped doing things to make it happen (the band) then nothing was going to propel us, we were never going to achieve this. So, one of the things I learned here was to dream, to dream big, like do not stop pursuing those things that can indeed be done. Another very important thing is to keep those dreams in mind. I don't know how to explain it. It is about knowing that what you choose now, in this moment, will impact your tomorrow (your future). It can impact the long, short, or medium term. This was a super important -a central message- that we actually promoted thorough the group's public campaign "I choose not to go to war" which was like, listen, the decision you make today will of course impact your tomorrow, your future. I think that's how I would explain it.

So basically, what you guys are doing is to make other youths aware of (or maybe) help others youths see that the actions of today are consequential for the future.

Yes, I would say so, exactly that. Your decisions today will be reflected in the future, and that determines the small or medium or long term. Then, yes it was important because we were about to graduate from high school and we had so many things to think about and all of them were super important because, in this case, if I decide I want to study (at the university) in 5 years I will be a professional. But if I decide that, uh, I do not know, I want to be at home, scratching my belly, then, my future will be very different. That decision will be reflected in my future. I think here (in the group) I gained a lot of knowledge and that really enriched me a lot.

You mentioned earlier that the group helped you to know yourself better. And you made me think that, you know, sometimes one can get to know oneself without belonging to a group. So, I was wondering, how is it to get to know yourself in the context of the group? I am curious about what you said.

Well, I think that in that moment... well first, of course you can have those spaces for yourself where you get to know yourself and that is all good, of course. But I do think that sometimes, it is quite important, even necessary, that another person tells you when something is right or wrong. Because, say that for me Coldplay is the best band in the world, and I think that is ok. And you may think they suck and that is ok as well. But in the context of the group, it is not about that. We have a reason we are all about. In some circumstances, it is necessary that someone tells you if you are thinking something -say a given problem- straight or if you are getting derailed to call it somehow. I am thinking specifically about one case, where I could have decided to use drugs.

I see. So, within the group was there anyone in particular who would tell you “this is fine”, “this is not”? Or was it more like everyone in the group would pitch in?

Well, yes, it was like normally, well, at the time there was usually a person, the group monitor. But, of course, no one would tell you, in every and each situation if

something is right or wrong. These were only suggestions of things that could be right or wrong because I think that, as I told you, you make decisions but as our song says, “It depends on me”. And it's like, in general, everything depends on me. What I was trying to tell you is that other people -or in this case a collective when you are working in a group- can suggest, can offer their perspective, like this could be better or this could be worse. But then these were like suggestions of what could be right or wrong, in this case also about how your life could be much later, in the future.

Thank you for that. Can you name one thing that works very well in the group?

I found very interesting the collective we had, the “collectivity”, all together. Because well, this was something that we were fairly clear about. If we were clear on something it certainly was that we had the same idea, we were united by the same idea. We were trying to create, to develop, a space to talk about the collective, the group. This is a group of young people, we wouldn't be thinking about a formal organisation but a group of friends (*un parche*), just like average kids that decide to push their ideas forward. And thinking, pondering about the fact that some things are wrong in the world and trying to bring those up for consideration by other people. Helping them think that maybe the things they are doing are not right, not good. Also, because we were very engaged in the group, and other people could see that, the group called the attention of more (young) people, they wanted to join us. We were willing to put ourselves in the shoes of others. I do not know, I used to call on the government a lot by then, because you see, for example, in the rural areas that the State should go -because rural areas are also a part of the country- and try to restore things that are not good. But the State doesn't and when you go and see, those who are doing that work are ordinary people. When you go to these places, you see that these are horrible, literally terrible. And in this case, it is the young people who take on the task of doing things. Even though we cannot go to these rural, faraway places, we can embrace, own our territory. In our case, our territory is our commune, which is the home of the group. We try to be present, to be here, to make our presence be felt in parks, in visible places. So, what is interesting about the group is that we always keep in mind where do we come from, who we are, always keep in mind the commune, our neighbourhood, which is where we come

from, and which is a place that was hit very hard by the (political) violence. So, of course, there are many spaces that have been violated. And in many cases, they are left there, and the spaces end up being submissive.

What do you mean by submissive spaces?

I mean that people would look at these spaces and will simply litter, toss garbage. I have a particular park in mind, the one that is close to the church, do you know that park?

Yes

That park is quite particular. Because I was once there, just observing people, and I saw that many would go there and simply toss rubbish. And of course, these are spaces that are supposedly public spaces. But because these are public spaces, people think they can do whatever they want with them, and it doesn't matter if the bench breaks down, because the park can't complain to people. In addition to that, it is not mine, so who cares, right? That is exactly the problem. The park won't complain. I find it funny, because that park was hit very hard during the violence, and that is wrong. So I found it wrong that people couldn't care less about it, they should care about the park, that is where their children spend their time, where they are growing up. So YPB, we always had those things in mind. And all of this comes from what I told you, how interested we were in these things as a group. Another thing I really liked was the impact we had in all these spaces, local spaces, in the city in general. We sought to go to many different places, and it was, when was it? Probably around 2012, that time was amazing for the group. The group had only around 5 or 6 months, and everyone knew about us, I mean everyone, local civic organisations, those are grown-ups, you know? And other young people here, they were like hey, look, there is this group of 10 people who are trying to change some things around here, and well, some people found this quite interesting. This, of course, resulted in more young people joining us, and so that was an amazing feeling, to realize that other people appreciate what you are doing, even when all you have is your willingness to work, nothing else. So, it felt amazing, to have an impact in these spaces.

Of course, I can imagine.

Yeah

I have two questions. You have said several times already that you guys had one idea, one idea that united you. And I was wondering, what is that idea? What does the group do, what do you guys do?

We always came back to this idea of “I choose not to go to war” and what we sought with it was to show other youngsters, or better, help them realize that they own their time, their ideas, their dreams, that they have the right to choose. Because that is an inalienable right, you are free to choose. So we always kept that in mind and that was the message, that no one can be forced into doing something they don’t want to, they [gangs, illegal armed groups] can’t force you.

Even when it may not feel like you have an option sometimes?

Even if, you know, in many places it does not feel like that is an option at all, and Barrancabermeja is just one example, there are many... anyways, what I’m trying to say is that we really tried to show them, to offer young people other alternatives. We called these alternatives peacebuilding, and we would use the arts, music. These are things that would call young people’s attention. Because I thought, if I come up with a 10-page long proposal, and present that proposal to one of my peers, or maybe to a younger pal, he would just stare at me like I’m crazy. But if instead, he sees me painting a graffiti on this wall, there is a guy around here, his name is [...] he is amazing, so what if a youngster sees me with him painting a mural, a really cool mural, then. Well, he will note there is something else available, and the alternative will turn attractive to that young person.

What attracts young people?

It could be said that young people, it is not that young people are irresponsible or anything, young people are not immature. Adults say young people are “the new generation” that is just funny. Anyways, I think these things are more attractive to youngsters because of... of a generational thing? I don’t know. I mean, of course customs change over the years. And so a long time ago people would get together to

discuss politics, or talk about what is right what is wrong and discuss important issues in life. Nowadays you just can't sit down with a kid from a gang -nor even with an average person for that matter- and talk politics because they are just not interested in it. So we thought the strategy was to do stuff they are interested in, and we also enjoyed it. Do the things they like to do. I don't know, it is like football. If you sit down with a football team you can talk to them using the topic they are interested in discussing, which is football. And then they will become interested in your stuff. But if you come and just talk to them and you go on and on and on, people will fall asleep in front of you. So we thought that working with things young people enjoyed, which we enjoyed too, would be a hook to bring more people in.

Is there anything that doesn't work that well in the group?

Yes, of course. It happened a while ago, we were sure we wanted to be a group with an impact in the city. We also had problems because we didn't consider that, I mean, we were not always "owning" things. For example, this space, the group. We had problems because there was always this thing; I think it has always been there, I don't know, for a long time we were always waiting for the monitor to "own" the meeting, and to tell us "ok, this is what we are going to do today in the group meeting. I want to you read this sheet and let's do this activity!". That was very useful at the beginning, but it could also turn into a problem because monitors change. And we would ask ourselves, what will happen when this monitor is not here anymore? What will happen with the group? Can the group sustain itself? Or will it disappear once the monitor is gone? So that was a very important question, it put us to thinking if we wanted to always be in this situation where we would always wait for the monitor to take the group on her shoulders and well, that was a dead road. You just can't simply wait for her to tell you what to do. And so, after some time we worked through it, all of us. And that was a pretty cool change. It was a really good feeling because after some time, for example, I would be one of those who would take up on the challenge and go like "ok, I want to do next week's workshop" and so no one would tell me how to do the workshop, I had to sit down and think how to do it, and draw from the others' experience if I needed to, this would be people who had done it before. And so it was about deciding how, when, and of course to generate more questions for the workshop. And so yes, that I would

say was something that didn't work well in the group, but we worked through it and we solved that problem.

Appendix 5: Fieldnotes (excerpt) study 1

July 2016

The taxi driver picks me up from the airport. As I pay him, he starts complaining that the fixed rate from/to the airport has been 20,000 pesos for the past 2 years and that the city major is not willing to increase it. He thinks this is very unjust. He tells me that the Colombian peso has gone down 30% since last year [which is true], “it is nonsense” you can’t do anything with the peso buried in a hole.

The driver talks about Cartagena [I wonder if he picks up on my accent and thinks I am from there? he has not yet asked where am I from]. He once went to Cartagena and stayed at an island “the same island where they caught Fritanga!”. He explains to me that Fritanga is a “narco” who got married on that island. This was about 5 or 6 years. I tell him that I think I remember hearing that story. [He sounds proud of having stayed at the same island where Fritanga got married, why is this valued?]

As he is talking about his vacations, we cross the corner commonly known as el “*El retén*” (“The police checkpoint”). This checkpoint was used by the police in the ‘90s and ‘00s. They would check who came in and out, they were particularly in the look for guerrilla members. There is a line of 4 big trucks next to *el retén*. This makes me remember that this week, the truck drivers’ union is on strike nationally.

The taxi driver tells me that the police caught Fritanga because of the musicians he asked to come and play at his wedding. It made no sense that these many musicians would be traveling to a tiny island and that’s how the police figured it out. There were lots of show business people as guests and also politicians and authorities from smaller towns. He talks about staying at the hotel “what was owned by the narco-trafficker” [he is not at all conflicted, it is now clearer that he is kind of proud of having been there]. He describes the hotel as spreading across the entire island in the Caribbean, and notes that it had “a bar in each corner of the island”. [He sounds excited that there were so many things in the hotel, describing the display of (drug) money].

We are now entering the neighbourhood. The park the youth group restored months ago is again run down [which I find to be sad. They worked several days painting and restoring that park. It makes think about the sustainability of the work the youngsters do in the neighbourhood. It also makes me think about the role of the city in all this, the lack of institutional presence in the neighbourhood]. I ask about the park, the taxi driver tells me that the city is considering turning it into a football pitch, they want to use synthetic grass, some turf, “but it is a matter of waiting and seeing, you know?” Also he says, it makes absolutely not sense, the average temperature here is 35C and so the synthetic grass would most likely burn any player if they fall to the ground. We get closer to the NGO and we cross another park, where YPB had also made “restauration” work last year. The paint is falling off.

PEER WORKSHOP AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE

The taxi driver drops me at the school (it is 7:30am), the group coordinator is waiting for me at the door. There are at least 30 parked motorcycles outside the school [most people use motorcycles in the neighbourhood]. The group monitor greets me and tells me we need to go back quickly, she is helping the kids to set up the activities for today. I ask about the motorcycles, these are the teachers’ motorcycles. There is a lot of (private) security in the door, no one can get in or out without showing an ID. The monitor tells me there have been problems with drug dealers in the area, they are trying to prevent them from selling drugs close to the school. It has been a hard task; the police won’t always come when called.

The monitor gets straight to help the youth group. They are all under the only shade in the school [It is early in the morning, yet it is already hot]. They’ve turned on several fans, and all is now set for the workshop. The monitor tells me they have been there since 7:00am setting everything up. Five youngsters come to say hi, they joke that “I’m late!” I tell them that I swear I just landed and that I came straight from the airport. “I was up at 4am today to come!” They tell me that it is good to see me and ask me if I can be in charge of taking the pictures for the day, a role I take gladly.

There are 4 “stations” each design for a certain activity, the music is playing, there is a big speaker. The youngsters have picked the song “Ella”, the song’s lyrics are about a woman who is self-reliant, happy, who has decided to be herself and be her best every day. The next song is about freedom and womanhood, the third one is about strong women deciding to be happy. All are about self-reliant, strong, and independent women.

The youths have painted big signs, these are very colourful. The activity today is focused on gender violence. The slogan they chose is “I don’t forget, do you?”. I ask a girl (16 years old) about the slogan, how did they come up with it? What does it mean? She explains that “violence” is much more than the political conflict, *la violencia*, it is much more, it is about what one sees at home, the daily interactions one has with other people, how girls relate to boys, how parents related to each other, how you go along with your boyfriend, how you treat your girlfriend. [The only part I’m missing is why do they refer to “not forgetting”].

Station 1 has a lot of heart shaped pins that read “I don’t forget, do you?” [I remember, do you?]. An “experienced” peace builder, one of the founding members, is in charge of the music. I come close, say hi, and ask what he is doing. He is playing with the volume, testing the speaker, trying to figure out where should it face in order for the music to be heard at the right volume. The right volume means that people take notice of the lyrics, but that the music won’t “burry” the message two group members will be reading on the microphone throughout.

Station 2 has a big sign with a big drawing of a man and a fist in his mouth, it reads “The world is much larger than a fist”. Station 3 has a large board where the attendees will be asked to stick messages on the thoughts that come to mind after the activity. The lead is “My commitment is:”

While I walk around, the group monitor comes to talk to me, she is worried as something happened right before I came in. One of the girls has a boyfriend, who is not part of the group, started pulling her arm quite hard because he didn’t want her to join the activity. The monitor had to tell him to leave her alone and go. [I am reminded once again that the violent environment is not at all “out there” or “removed” from the lives of these youngsters, rather these are daily experiences they

face]. The monitor leaves, the kids need her to set up some balloons. A new girl [I had not met her yet] pulls the monitor's arm, she wants to talk to her. She looks very shy, the monitor explains that she can read from the paper, I just now understood, she is in charge of reading the groups' message on the microphone and is nervous about it. The monitor encourages her, and calls another girl, I know her, she's been in the group for about half a year. The monitor explains to the girl that the shy girl is nervous about taking the mic and asks her to help her. The monitor leaves to check on the third station.

I talk to the girls in station 2, there is 4 of them. I ask them, why is it that they picked this topic this time. They say they have been discussing "toxic relationships" in the group's weekly meeting. I don't remember seeing that topic in the groups' guidebook and ask, that is a new topic, isn't it? They say there are three girls in the group who are in "toxic relationships" and that they, as a group, decided to touch on that issue and discuss it. [ok, that's how the idea about this workshop came about. What do they understand by toxic relation, exactly?]. I ask what a toxic relationship is [they look at me as if I were dumb. So, it is "obvious"]. One explains, it is when you are with someone who tells you what to wear and what not to wear, what you can do and what you cannot do, where to go, who to hang out with. Someone who controls you, says a second girl. They tell me they see this happening at school, with their peers, and has also happened to people from the group. So, they want to work to prevent this from happening.

The two girls on the microphone are now practicing their message. The older girl is telling the younger one (the shy one) at what distance she should hold the microphone, explaining that her voice needs to go over the music. She asks the youngster in charge of the music to come where they are. He explains to the younger one that she can lift her finger or point towards him and he will make sure to turn the volume down [the two older group members are encouraging the younger one, telling her there is nothing to be worried about. They are joking about her being very small but having a very loud voice]. The two girls agree that the older one will start and will then turn the microphone to the younger one. They will take turns.

The bell has now rung, and all students are coming out for recess. That is the sign for everyone to go to their positions. The older girl takes the microphone and starts

inviting everyone to come and participate in the activity. “Come join our campaign, come think with us about gender violence and how to prevent it, we want to hear your thoughts, your reflections, I invite you to sign a compromise against gender violence”. “Hello everyone, welcome to our activity against gender violence”. She passes on the microphone to the younger girl. She starts quite shy, the youngster in charge of the music lowers the volume a bit, looks at her and signals with his hand “talk a bit louder” the younger girl does, and he gives her a thumbs up and a smile. The older girl is right next to her, holding the piece of paper where they wrote down the message for today. After a little while, the younger girl starts to talk louder and more confidently [she is also standing more straight now, her body language has changed]. There are now about 50 students going around, visiting the different stations. The older girl needs to leave the younger one with the microphone to help in station 3, there are too many students there. Another girl comes and holds the paper for the girl in the microphone. The youngster in charge of the music looks at them and asks them to start reading the message again whenever they want, but perhaps it would be good to leave two or three songs pass by and read it again. He is an experienced member and knows the little tricks. He explains to me that they have read the message twice, so they will wait for the attendees to leave and new ones to come, to start reading the message again. Otherwise they get bored of us! (laughs). [I find it interesting that even when he is clearly the most experienced one there, he suggests options to other group members rather than telling them what to do. The tone is one of “you are in charge, you have the mic”. He has also been helping others to figure out where to put the signs in other stations and how to approach the attendees].

All girls have a handkerchief in the head, they make me think of “Rosie the riveter”. The handkerchiefs are of many colours, but all have white dots. I realize that the boys have no identifiers today. There are now around eighty? Perhaps ninety attendees? they are of all ages, students from 5th or 6th grade and youngsters from 10th grade. A few group members in some stations are struggling a little with the number of attendees around. Each group member is talking to a small group of 3-5 attendees. As I’m taking pictures a girl pulls my arm, she signals “Help!” she is working with 10 kids at a time and they have started throwing crayons at each other.

I intervene, laughing, and explain that the next attendees will need those. They (luckily) listen to me and get back to writing their messages. I leave.

The group members are talking to different attendees, they explain the slogan, the reason why they are doing the campaign. They explain they want to prevent violence, and that violence is in everyday life not only in the context of the (political) conflict. Younger attendees listen in a quite respectful way, as if YPB were teachers or “older kids” that need to be paid attention to. Older attendees (older adolescents) listen. Some are quite interested [more the girls than the boys, is my impression] others “play it cool” and pass by, take a peak and leave.

The monitor is walking around all stations, she does not talk to the attendees, she rather talks to the group members. There are two other group members doing the same as the group monitor. If anyone gets distracted or is not talking to the attendees, they encourage them to do so. The monitor talks to a small group of attendees and tells them “listen girls, she has something to tell you” [pointing at a group member] and leaves after winking at the group member.

The girls in the microphone have started to speak again, the older one has the microphone now. She talks about the rationale and the motivation of the workshop. She describes “toxic relationships” and gives the same description I was given by the other group members. “Women don’t stay silent. You cannot and should not put yourself through this”. “If we want to talk about a peaceful Colombia we cannot have, there cannot be, gender violence anymore”.

Tasks at stations:

Station 1, the sign with the fist. “The world is larger than a fist”. The attendees are asked to write in a sticky note their reactions/thoughts about gender violence and put it on top of the fist. What happens is that the sticky notes end up hiding or “burying” the drawing of the fist. Some of the messages are very general, “we should not mistreat women”. There is one that talks about “treating my mum well, to respect my mum”.

Station 2, a board that says, “My compromise is....”. Attendees need to write down how or what will they do to fight, reduce, or prevent gender violence. There are both men and women writing their compromises. An example: “I promise to respect women”. Those who write are younger than group members (most group members are in 10th or 11th grade), the attendees doing the activities should be in 7th or 8th grade, probably. They are in small groups, boys with boys and girls with girls. Older adolescents go around in pairs. Some look at the younger attendees who are participating with some interest but “play it cool”. About half of them end up engaging in the activities, the other half tend to take a peak and leave.

Station 3, there is a big board on the wall. The attendees are asked to write down support messages pertaining to gender violence. They are encouraged to think of gender violence, what it is, what it does, and why is it wrong.

The girls on the microphone are speaking again. The younger girl has started to improvise a little. Both the youngster in charge of the music and the older girl are smiling at her. She gives her a thumbs up [indeed she is very good at speaking!]. She is talking louder, it is clear to me that she is feeling more self-reliant. She is now handling the situation on her own, the older girl leaves again to help with a small group of kids who are running around pushing others. In total, there must be around 25 group members working on today’s workshop.

The social worker comes in to say hi. She starts telling me that she had a discussion with the mother of a student today, relating to the boy’s girlfriend and the mother not liking the girl. A cleaning lady comes in to say hi as well. She tells me she is fed up of [expletive] men who mistreat or hit women. “You see, the thing is that women should not let men do this to them”. A second cleaning lady who has come to see what is going on tells me “the problem is that they are financially dependent on the husband, so they can’t do anything but taking the crap in. “Often times it is not only about being hit but, for instance, the husband may have other women”. She laughs and says that if that were to happen to her, she would kick her husband of the house or at the very least have him sleep on the couch if he did something wrong. “I don’t give [expletive], I would kick him out!”. Both leave, they need to go back to work. A guard comes running towards us and says that one boy has a big knife and that he is fighting another student. They leave running, there is a bunch of kids yelling

approximately 25 metres from us. The boy leaves running to the back of the building. There are now two security guards chasing him, some students yell, and some students laugh. Some others run after the boy and the guards [there is violence around the activity, in people's personal stories, and in the social world around].

The activity is now over, the girls on the microphone close by saying "our body can be a territory of war or a territory of peace", "we can't let anyone mistreat us".

The guard is now back, they've got the knife. Apparently, the knife was as big as the distance between a hand and an elbow. The attendees have now left, everyone goes back to class. The group members need to also go back to class, so everyone helps to pick everything up very quickly. The monitor, two cleaning ladies, and I remain and finish the task by picking up some of the materials that are left on the floor, sweeping the floor, and putting chairs and tables back in an empty room.

Appendix 6: Instruments study 2

Some questions about you

11. What is your date of birth? _____ / _____ / _____
Day Month Year
12. How old are you? _____
13. Are you?
Male ☐ Female ☐
14. What year are you at school? _____
15. What school do you attend? _____
16. What shift do you attend?
Day ☐ Evening ☐ Mixed ☐
17. (If applicable) How long ago did you join Young peacebuilders? (Number of years or months)
Years ☐ Months ☐
18. What youth groups are you a member of? And for how long? (N. of years or months)
- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| Footprints | <input type="checkbox"/> | Years | <input type="checkbox"/> | Months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Music | <input type="checkbox"/> | Years | <input type="checkbox"/> | Months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sports team | <input type="checkbox"/> | Years | <input type="checkbox"/> | Months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Football gang | <input type="checkbox"/> | Years | <input type="checkbox"/> | Months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other group (_____) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Years | <input type="checkbox"/> | Months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
19. Do you work? Yes ☐ Hours per week? _____
No ☐
20. What is the monthly household income? (approximately)
- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Less than COP\$ 180,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Between COP\$180.001 and COP\$544,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Between COP\$ 544,001 and COP\$ 1088,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Between COP\$ 1088,001 and COP\$ 1631,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| COP\$ 1631,001 or higher | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Interview guide

SELF IN CONTEXT

- How long have you lived here? [Barranca / Soacha]
- How is it like to live here? [Barranca / Soacha]
- How is it like to grow up here? (As a child and adolescent)
- What are the main challenges youngsters deal with around here?

YOUR GROUP

- What group are you a member of?
 - YBP / Other YD / Church / Sports ☐
 - Gang / Football gangs / Other band ☐
- Why did you join the group?
- Why are you still a member of the group?
- Where do new members come from? (How are new members recruited?)
- Think about the rules of your group
 - What are the ground rules of the group?
 - How are these rules taught to younger folks?
 - How are these rules taught to new folks?
- What happens when someone does not follow the rules?
 - Can you give me an example?
 - Why is this a good way of handling “noncompliance”?
 - Are there any better ways to handle with non-compliance?
- **ONLY IF YPB:** What does the expression “peacebuilder” mean to you?
 - Have you heard of the concept “peace in everyday life” as used by the YPB?
 - What does “peace in everyday life” mean to you?
 - Is this related in any way with the Colombian peace process?
 - How?

INSECURITY

- Do you feel safe living here?
- Do you ever feel unsafe living here?
 - Can you go outside at night? Why is that?
- What makes you feel threatened in your day-to-day life?
- What places make you feel safe?
- Have you ever been a victim of [Robbery/Fight/Stray bullet]
 - Would you tell me what happened?
- What is the worst that has happened to you here? (*If narcotraffic/gangs/football gangs*)
 - How did you get involved with them?
 - How was this experience?
 - What made you look for something different?
 - What/who helped you deal with this?

VIOLENCE

I would like to ask you about your experiences with violence, is that O.K.?

- Is [Barranca/Soacha] a violent place?
 - Why is that?

- How do you feel in relation to violence?
 - What does violence mean to you?
- Have you or someone close to you gotten involved in the cycle of violence?
 - What happened?
- Please tell me about a time when you had to use violence
 - Why did you had to use violence?
 - How did it feel like?
 - Did this change how you see yourself in any way? Please explain.
- I am now going present to you several dilemmas about the use of violence. These are dilemmas because there is no right answer to them, some people would argue in one direction and other people would argue in the other direction. For each one of these, I would like to understand your own point of view, your solution. We will be talking about the use of violence and the reasons you may think it is right or wrong to use it in different circumstances. Please tell me, do you think it is right to use violence:
 - In self-defence? Why? (Harm to you or your family)
 - Yes _____ No _____
 - For punishment? Why? (Something really bad, a rape)
 - Yes _____ No _____
 - To defend your reputation? Why? (So people don't lose respect for you)
 - Yes _____ No _____
 - To defend your honor or that of your family? Why? (Young sister is pregnant)
 - Yes _____ No _____
 - To defend your group? Why? (Harm or offence to your group)
 - Yes _____ No _____
 - For revenge? Why?
 - When someone under your responsibility does not follow the rules? Why? (General, responsible for soldier/ Sibling, for younger sibling)
 - Yes _____ No _____
 - Because someone you really respect says so? Why? (Because God says so?)
 - Yes _____ No _____
- Have you lost someone to violence?

DRUGS

- Do people use drugs around here?
 - Why do you think people use drugs around here?
- Have you ever used drugs?
 - Under which circumstances?
- Do you or someone close to you use drugs?
- Do you think that drugs or alcohol are related to the issue of violence at all?
 - How come?

MORAL VALUES

- What is the most important moral value?
- What moral values do you want to pass onto the next generation (of Colombians)?

THE FUTURE

- How do you think your future will be?
- When you think about the future, how many years' time from now do you think about?
 - How do you think your life will be in the future in relation to work?
How would you like it to be?
 - How do you think your life will be in the future in relation to family?
How would you like it to be?
 - How do you think your life will be in the future in the context of the peace process?

THE PEACE PROCESS

- To what extent do you support the peace process?
- How realistic do you think the peace process is?
- Are forgiveness and reconciliation between the FARC and the citizens possible?
 - Yes Why?
 - No Why?

ABOUT YOU

- Give me the five words that you think describe you the best
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
 - 4. _____
 - 5. _____

Appendix 7: Thematic codebook study 2

GROUP LEVEL UNDERSTANDINGS OF VIOLENCE						
Category	Sub-category	Definition	Code frequency (N)		Datum example	
			Non-Violent group	Violent group	Non-violent group	Violent group
Definition of violence	Interpersonal level	Definitions that use the individual as the unit of description	146 (29)	148 (33)	<i>Violence is when you harm someone physically or psychologically</i>	<i>There are different types of violence. Violence is like an aggression, with a gun. You can be shot at or stabbed. Violence is also psychological violence, because it makes you feel bad.</i>
	Group level	Definitions that use the group as the unit of description	2 (2)	76 (25)	<i>(Dumb) kids would fight over a football game, they will through stones at each other, use knives and sticks, all that.</i>	<i>There are many types of violence; there is the one that is about violence between families, and also violence between gangs.</i>
	Societal level	Definitions referring to societal factors as the unit of description	61 (23)	56 (20)	<i>The 90's and early 00' were the worst years. It was all about the war, live or die. People would get killed. And people were really afraid of (the armed) groups and the violence</i>	<i>I am one of those women who hates "macho" men. It makes me angry. I don't like machismo. If a man is being rude one can tell him that you've got your gang backing you up. If he gets disrespectful, the gang will take care of it</i>
Attributed causes	Interpersonal causes	Causal explanations of individual level violence	46 (22)	78 (28)	<i>Young people sometimes seem unable to talk. Everthing needs to be dealt with by fighting</i>	<i>Offenses, when a person humiliates another person</i>
	Group causes	Causal explanations of group level violence	10 (9)	94 (30)	<i>I think is bad communication, they don't know how to listen. The idea is that these groups should talk to each other instead of fighting</i>	<i>The thing is that sometimes a group doesn't like to be the looser, so they will fight back and the shit only gets bigger and bigger</i>
	Societal causes	Causal explanations of community or city level violence	48 (22)	52 (26)	<i>The neighborhood is insecure. There are fights between bands or gangs, and even for people like myself, who don't belong to a gang, it's the same, you may end up dead because of a stray bullet</i>	<i>There are always fights. Between gangs, between guerillas or between drug dealers. Before, it was the paramilitaries. So one would have to hide all of the time</i>
	Drugs and alcohol	Cause effect relationship between drugs and alcohol, and violence	65 (30)	108 (33)	<i>Many times they would go as far as to kill someone to get weed. Because they need the money to buy drugs, so yeah, drugs cause problems, violence, because of that</i>	<i>I get drugs here, in my neighborhood. So that's how violence can get started, if a drug user buys the drugs on the other side of the neighborhood (from another group), violence will get started because he didn't buy his drug from this side of the neighborhood.</i>
Common sense practices	Get along with violent people	Get along with violent people in the community	5 (2)	18 (11)	<i>Once they tried to rob my cellphone. But your friends, you know, the people you know, they help you out and let them know they can't steal your stuff</i>	<i>I feel safe in my neighborhood. I know who lives here and I know the guys ... let's say the guys that you are not supposed to hang out with. I know that I can't mess with them and they know me, and that makes you you "a kiddo from the hood" and the kids from the neighborhood can count on being safe here</i>
	Keep family out of gang trouble	Avoid getting family engaged in the cycle of violence	No data	18 (7)	<i>No data</i>	<i>So, being in the gang... many times they (rival gang) messed with my family. They would throw glass and paint at my house. I got super angry but I also felt bad because I got my family involved in the mess. They were messing with my family</i>
	Violence only when warranted	Do not use violence when unwarranted	7 (7)	24 (15)	<i>You can't do stuff that you will regret doing after the fact. Once there was a fight and they stabbed my uncle. And of course I was furious and of course, you want to react but you know that if you do, you will only be getting yourself into more trouble.</i>	<i>If you want to get into trouble, do it by yourself, you know? (laughing) But it is often the case that you are hanging out with your pal and your pal freaking gets into trouble and of course you can't let him there to be killed. So you have to get involved and react, but that was a stupid thing for him to do in the first place</i>

MORAL REASONING							
Category	Sub-category	Defintion	Code frequency (N)		Datum example		
			Non-Violent group	Violent group			
Impulsive violence		Violence is justified by lack of self control	24 (16)	19 (14)	<i>I know it was wrong, but I was really angry</i>	<i>Sometimes you are just filled with anger and you just let things happen, not ideal, but that's how it is</i>	
Instrumental violence	Baddest	Goal: To be seen as a hero, fearless, the baddest	No data	8 (2)	No data	<i>I don't know, how I see it is that it is a feeling that I really like. I like to get that anger out by punching the hares (rival gang). It is like an instinct and people know that I will fight and that I don't care who's in front of me. I'm the craziest one</i>	
	Be feared	Goal: To be feared	2 (1)	12 (5)	<i>Sometimes you have to do it, you know? (punching people), otherwise people won't respect you</i>	<i>They know they can't mess with me. If they do, I will make them show some respect (by punching them). It may be a little wrong, but you've got to do it. I'm the boss here, so I've got to do it</i>	
	Deterrence	Goal: To deter others from aggressing	16 (10)	38 (20)	<i>In principle, I would not react. I'm a pasive person, but if you mess with me, I will use violence. You need to do that otherwise they won't leave you alone</i>	<i>If you let them, they will take the opportunity and hit you, because they know you won't defend yourself. So you've got to defend yourself and get them out of here, otherwise they will always be there, messing with you</i>	
	Punishment	Goal: To punish transgressions	5 (5)	7 (4)	<i>If the kiddo (younger sibling) is messing around, you talk to him and ask him, "O.K, what's wrong with you, why are you not doing what I asked you to do?" that should solve things, but if he keeps messing around and won't listen to you, then you would have to use violence. He is not paying attention</i>	<i>They messed with my family, so I called a friend of mine and we both went to his house and broke all the windows. It isn't right, but those are the rules of the street</i>	
Moral violence	Self-defense	To defend your safety and wellbeing and that of your family	29 (23)	38 (26)	<i>We are human beings and we need to survive. So, we need to defend ourselves</i>	<i>I had to use violence when they were using violence against me. Someone wanted to stab me and I was not going to allow him to do that, so I got a brick to defend myself. My safety comes first</i>	
	Unity	To care for and support the integrity of in-groups	14 (7)	89 (30)	<i>If they are harming one of your loved ones, you can't talk to them in that moment, obviously you need to use violence to defend them, that's the right thing to do</i>	<i>Of course it is right, if they are violent with my group, I won't take crap from anyone, the group comes first, you've got to react</i>	
	Proportionality	Rewards and punishments to be proportionate to merit, benefits to be calibrated to contributions and judgements to be based on a utilitarian calculus of costs and benefits.	2 (2)	1 (1)	<i>Often times, during the protests, well you have to defend your rights. If you are proposing something to the city, and you want it to work, and you know it would work for everyone here. Often times you have to make sure your rights are being respected. But lately, these rights are being violated, we don't get the basics [referring to a failing traffic light that caused the death of a child]</i>	<i>The State is killing them (the guerrilla) but they are fighting a fair fight, they are fighting for their rights and our rights. They have the guts to fight for a fairer and more equal society</i>	
	Hierarchy	Respect rank in social groups, where superiors are entitled to deference and respect but must also lead, guide, direct, and protect subordinates	6 (4)	12 (7)	<i>I think they (younger siblings) need to respect you. If you don't teach them, and sometimes you will hit them, they will learn that they can do whatever they want, and that is not right</i>	<i>They need to respect the hierarchy in the group, if they mess with the leader, the gang will steal their hunch money for a couple of weeks so they learn their lesson</i>	
	Equality	Balanced, in kind reciprocity, tit for tat, equal treatment, equal say, and equal opportunity	12 (7)	32 (22)	<i>I think in that case it would apply an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, because in that case, it is fair that he [a rapist] suffers what he needs to suffer, because he hurt another person.</i>	<i>I think that using violence against him [a man who hurts a woman] would very much soothe the person, the victim. And yes, violence against him would be the right thing to do</i>	

Appendix 8: Transcript of qualitative interview (excerpt) study 2

BA226. Female participant (Non-violent groups).

I now would like to know if you think that Barranca is a violent place. Yes? No? and the reason why. You said before you think Barranca is violent in a way.

I would say “partly yes”, “partly no”, it is, and it is not. It is not because the victims are not likely enticers of violence. This is because we don’t want that it (the political violence) repeats itself, we don’t want that other people repeat the story, you know? And it is (a violent place) because there certainly are people who are violent.

Of course. Are these people violent as in “armed groups” violent? Or are we talking about other types of violence?

Well, the armed groups have different forms of violence. They murder, kidnap, rape, etcetera, etcetera.

Okay, I wanted to ask you, what does the word “violence” mean to you?

I forgot to mention something in regards to your previous question

I’m all ears!

There is also intrafamily violence, violence against women. So, when I say Barranca is violent, I am not only talking about armed groups, but the violence that exists in various aspects of people’s life.

I see.

Ok, I am now ready to answer your next question (we laugh)

My next question was, what does violence mean to you? We have spoken of the word peace. But, what does the word violence mean to you?

Violence is like ... causing harm, be it physical, verbal, psychological. Harm can be done to myself or to a third party.

**Ok, of course. It can be towards oneself, clearly, and also towards others. Okay
How do you feel about violence?**

Can you explain the question to me, please?

How you feel about it? You just said that violence involves harm, either against yourself or to a third party. I was wondering how do you feel about this violence; what reaction does violence prompt in you?

Violence causes in me... ah! I have the word on the tip of my tongue!

Why don't you describe to me how does it make you feel, I'm sure the word you are looking for will come up.

Impotence. Impotence when (...) they are transgressing either the rights of a person or when a person is being harmed and I cannot do anything. Or maybe I can but I do not have the courage to do something about it. So yes, it generates a lot of impotence and perhaps also anger against myself.

I see

Because I may not have the courage to face it.

I understand. But it is also true that getting involved can be difficult or even dangerous sometimes, no? Have you or does someone close to you been involved in the cycle of violence?

My family, that is, my parents and my two brothers they are internally displaced people, they were displaced by the violence. That was before I was born, they used to live in the countryside, and they had to leave the house where they lived and like, start again here in the city, because of the armed forces.

And that was, how long ago was that? 10? 15 years?

Yes, more than 15, about 20 years, more or less

20 years. Okay, and if we now think of a situation, I would like you to think of a situation, a daily life situation, where you found yourself having to use violence. I would like to discuss with you that situation, where you had to or perhaps decided to use violence.

Let me think...

Take all the time you need (we laugh)

Mmm, maybe ... at school, for example. So, I'm playing with my friend and we start like hitting the other a little, and then she hits me harder and I hit her harder too (laugh) and then the (...) is also like a form of violence and suddenly in the end we can end up angry and annoyed by that.

Of course, and so this is something that actually happened, then.

Yes

Alright, then I have two questions about that incident. How did you feel, how did you feel afterwards? Was everything the same, was it different, did you think something in particular?

It was different

In what sense?

I felt like, on the one hand, deceived you could say. Because then we started to play and I thought, I do not know, she's not going to hit me so hard, it's going to be like only a game. And then, well, like I let myself be fooled, she hit me harder.

Sure. And what about you? Did this change in any way how you see yourself? (...nods) How so? Please explain.

Because if in the end (...) if at the beginning it was like something innocent, like a simple game, then I became that person who... She attacked me. And in attacking her back, I became that person creating violence. Instead of avoiding the situation, what I did was to encourage violence, to reproduce violence.

Ok, thank you for that. I am now going present to you several dilemmas about the use of violence. These are dilemmas because there is no right answer to them. Some people would argue in one direction and other people would argue in the other direction. For each one of these, I would like to understand your own point of view, your solution. We will be talking about the use of violence and the reasons you may think it is right or wrong to use it in different circumstances. So, what I am going to do is to give you different situations and what I would like you to explain to me, is if you consider if it is morally acceptable or not acceptable to use violence in the situations that I am going to describe and why.

Do you think it's morally acceptable to use violence in self-defence? If someone, I do not know, has a knife, a gun, and something is going to happen to you, it is threatening your integrity. Is it right to use violence, is it not right to use violence, and why?

Well, first we have to try not to use violence and try other methods. I do not know, like talking to him, telling him not to, and try everything. And then I think that if the person does not cooperate ...

Does not cooperate ... (we laugh)

If the person does not, you know, work with you, then yes, (violence) in defence, in my own defence would be morally right.

Self-Defence...

But I should first try, try to prevent the person from doing something to me.

Okay. Do you think it is right to use violence as punishment? As punishment in the sense of, for example, when someone does something very bad. For instance, when people steal and the community wants to lynch them, or, I'm thinking of a child rapist, that kind of thing. Is it okay to use violence, yes or no and why?

No, I don't think so.

Why?

Because, I mean, no. The fact that a person, like steals something, does not justify (the use of violence) because, well. Maybe the victim has a perspective on what happened, but you need to also seek the perspective of the person who stole, his version of things.

(Nods)

Perhaps he did it because he needed the money, and maybe he asked on the street and nobody gave him anything and then he was like, he had to steal.

Okay

Then, you should consider the other person's point of view before hurting him.

Okay. I see your point. I understand that one could have... let's say that the person has a valid point, I mean, let's say the person is starving, right? And he asked for money and no one gave him money, and he stole. You are saying that violence as a punishment is not justified in that case, and that his or her perspective should be considered. Ok. Let's say the person is not, let's say he is not in absolute necessity. He is someone who steals because that's what he does. He is a thief. Would the use of violence to punish him be morally right?

No, I don't think so. Because we should not take justice in our own hands. In the case you are mentioning, then I would get the authorities involved. The police.

Okay, thank you for that. Do you think it's right, morally acceptable, to use violence to defend your reputation? Yes? or No? and why?

No, I don't

Why?

Because, for example, say they are saying things about me

(nods)

Mmmhh, no. I don't find that... No, I don't see why I would have to, you know, get to the point where I would use violence to defend my reputation.

What would you rather do about it?

Well, I do not know, I would simply not pay attention

Okay. Do you think it's okay to use violence to defend your honour or your family's honour? Imagine that someone does something very bad to your family, that hurts their honour. For example, that the youngest sister gets pregnant, or someone embarrasses your family with things that offend and impact the honour of the family. Is it morally right to use violence? Is it not? And why?

I think that's what the police, the justice system, and the people are for, and I do not think there is a need to use violence.

Okay. Do you think it is acceptable to use violence to defend your group? Imagine that someone messes with your group of best friends, with the youth group, something like that. Is it morally right to use violence? yes? no? Why? Or why not?

Well, the truth is that I actually do not understand why people do that. At my school, you know, there are always cases where there are fights, girls get together to fight. So no.

(nods)

I do not understand why you have to get there to solve a problem, if you can sit down and talk (...) the importance of the dialogue, you know? They won't even try to talk, to establish a dialogue. Even the girls like, they do not know anything for sure, there is uncertain or incomplete information (...) instead of starting a fight, because they go for it straightaway, and all there is, is just a gossip.

Of course

Well I think, I do not think I have to get there to solve the problem. It wouldn't be right to use violence in that case.

Okay. Do you think it's morally acceptable to use violence for revenge, yes? no? And why? That someone uses violence in retribution.

No, because if I used violence in revenge, I would also become that person, in wanting to have revenge. I would be just like that person, the one who did something wrong to me.

How should things be solved? How do you deal with that?

I think that talking to the person would not work, because he or she probably won't want to talk. And if that person like, if perhaps I hurt that person and that's the reason why he or she did something wrong to me, I would try to apologize to that person, ask him for forgiveness and if that person does not want to forgive me then I would know, deep inside, that yes I asked for forgiveness and that it was that person who did not want to solve things.

Okay. Do you think it's morally acceptable to use violence when someone who is under your responsibility does not obey the rules? Think of, for example, younger siblings or a soldier under the authority of a commander. Situations where there is a hierarchy and the one at the bottom does not obey the rules. Is it right? Is it wrong to use violence? and why?

No, I don't think it is right.

Why?

Using violence is not right. For example, I do not agree with moms who hit their children

(nods)

My mom, never ever in my life, my parents have never hit me

(nods)

And also (...) I am not like a very violent person. Because violence only creates more violence. So if you, as a child, your parents hit you, what they are teaching you is that if someone does not obey you, if someone does not listen to you, you have to harm them, you have to attack them.

Sure

So, it's not like something, like very good, is not positive. It is a vicious circle

And the last question, do you think it is acceptable to use violence because God wants you to use violence?

No. Because I should follow my own perspective on things. It is important that I make my own decisions by myself. That being God, or even you know, Colombia's president (we laugh) telling me "you have to use violence", if I don't think it is right, they can't force me. Then no, it would not influence my decision, it wouldn't be right.

Okay, thank you for that. Let's talk very briefly about drugs. Plenty of interviewees have been telling me about this idea of drugs and alcohol being connected to violence, and I was wondering, do you see any relationship between drugs, alcohol, and violence? Are they related? Not related? and how? I would like to have your perspective on this topic.

Yes, they are related. Because, well I have heard cases of people who are in drugs and because they already have an addiction, consumption leads to an even worse addiction, and what they do is, like, if they need money for something, they steal it. Hence, violence is being created and fostered by them. And the if the person steals, and then the community wants to lynch him, there you have more violence and so on and so forth. It is like a vicious circle of violence, violence, and violence because of the thing, you know? Drugs.

Appendix 9: Stata output for chi-square analysis study 2

Items: Self-defence (1), punishment (2), reputation (3), honour (4), group (5), revenge (6), authority (7), god's orders (8).

```
. bysort item: tab violence_ group, chi2
```

```
-> item = 1
```

violence_	group		Total
	0	1	
0	6	7	13
1	28	23	51
Total	34	30	64

Pearson chi2(1) = 0.3184 Pr = 0.573

```
-> item = 2
```

violence_	group		Total
	0	1	
0	14	18	32
1	19	12	31
Total	33	30	63

Pearson chi2(1) = 1.9422 Pr = 0.163

```
-> item = 3
```

violence_	group		Total
	0	1	
0	21	29	50
1	13	1	14
Total	34	30	64

Pearson chi2(1) = 11.3601 Pr = 0.001

-> item = 4

violence_	group		Total
	0	1	
0	14	27	41
1	20	3	23
Total	34	30	64

Pearson chi2(1) = 16.5016 Pr = 0.000

-> item = 5

violence_	group		Total
	0	1	
0	17	27	44
1	17	3	20
Total	34	30	64

Pearson chi2(1) = 11.8691 Pr = 0.001

-> item = 6

violence_	group		Total
	0	1	
0	24	25	49
1	10	5	15
Total	34	30	64

Pearson chi2(1) = 1.4427 Pr = 0.230

-> item = 7

violence_	group		Total
	0	1	
0	28	26	54
1	6	4	10
Total	34	30	64

Pearson chi2(1) = 0.2250 Pr = 0.635

-> item = 8

violence_	group		Total
	0	1	
0	34	30	64
Total	34	30	64

Appendix 10: Instrument study 3

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

How old are you?

- ☐ 18-19
- ☐ 20-21
- ☐ 22-23
- ☐ 24-25

What house do you attend?

- ☐ House name #1
- ☐ House name #2
- ☐ House name #3
- ☐ House name #4
- ☐ House name #5
- ☐ Other house

Who do you live with?

- ☐ With both parents
- ☐ With mother only
- ☐ With father only
- ☐ With grandparents
- ☐ I don't live with my family
- ☐ I live with my partner
- ☐ I live with my partner and children

Have you used marihuana?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you used alcohol? (For example, beer or wine)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Are you in a gang?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you ever been in a gang?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you have gang members as friends?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you worn gang colors?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you hang out with gang members?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you flashed gang signs?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you been violent with someone?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Would you use violence in self-defense? That is, to defend yourself or your family if someone is going to harm you?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Would you use violence to defend your honor or your family's honor?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Would you use violence to defend your reputation? That is, so people don't lose respect for you

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Would you use violence to defend your group?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you been threatened with a gun?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you been shot?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you been hit by a bullet?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Appendix 11: Stata output for multivariate models study 3

```
. logistic violent_honor ib3.gang_degree gender i.unit_categ i.household i.age drugs_weed  
gun_threatened drunk_beer_wine
```

```
note: 6.unit_categ != 0 predicts success perfectly
```

```
6.unit_categ dropped and 2 obs not used
```

```
Logistic regression                Number of obs    =          367
```

```
LR chi2(19)                        =          61.37
```

```
Prob > chi2                        =          0.0000
```

```
Log likelihood = -217.91453         Pseudo R2      =          0.1234
```

```
-----
```

```
violent_honor | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
```

```
-----+-----
```

```
gang_degree |
```

```
1 | 1.667031   .5522125    1.54   0.123    .8709215    3.190866
```

2		1.207923	.3661819	0.62	0.533	.6668029	2.18817
gender		1.10527	.2867553	0.39	0.700	.6647057	1.837838
unit_categ							
2		.4812469	.1866831	-1.89	0.059	.2249955	1.029348
3		.4724534	.160211	-2.21	0.027	.2430597	.9183433
4		.3910656	.2078795	-1.77	0.077	.1379669	1.108471
5		.3498041	.3001881	-1.22	0.221	.0650664	1.880584
6		1	(empty)				
household							
2		1.243667	.3747278	0.72	0.469	.6890168	2.244805
3		.8454838	.5113864	-0.28	0.781	.258381	2.766623

4		1.4684	.9156468	0.62	0.538	.4325761	4.984553
5		1.704918	.6082419	1.50	0.135	.8472884	3.430646
6		.1066634	.0851753	-2.80	0.005	.0222995	.5101953
7		.6369161	.3147004	-0.91	0.361	.2418262	1.677494
age							
4		.6121834	.2025543	-1.48	0.138	.3200684	1.170901
5		1.219106	.4284902	0.56	0.573	.6121556	2.427845
6		.8382922	.2883649	-0.51	0.608	.4271593	1.645133
drugs_weed		2.774208	.7874364	3.59	0.000	1.590495	4.838889
gun_threatened		1.279784	.3597179	0.88	0.380	.7377065	2.220189
drunk_beer_wine		1.779574	.8538093	1.20	0.230	.6949026	4.557305
_cons		.601772	.3558623	-0.86	0.390	.1888286	1.917769


```

-----
. logistic violent_reputation ib3.gang_degree gender i.unit_categ i.household i.age drugs_weed
gun_threatened drunk_beer_wine

```

note: 6.unit_categ != 0 predicts success perfectly

6.unit_categ dropped and 2 obs not used

Logistic regression	Number of obs	=	367
	LR chi2(19)	=	27.93
	Prob > chi2	=	0.0847
Log likelihood = -234.63217	Pseudo R2	=	0.0562

```

-----
violent_reputation | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-----+-----

```

gang_degree |

1		1.528046	.4829259	1.34	0.180	.8224726	2.838909
---	--	----------	----------	------	-------	----------	----------

2		.9566573	.2899659	-0.15	0.884	.5281465	1.732839
gender		1.062431	.2628375	0.24	0.807	.654214	1.725368
unit_categ							
2		.6113743	.2218326	-1.36	0.175	.3002307	1.244971
3		.9298436	.2840941	-0.24	0.812	.5109086	1.692297
4		.6904357	.3439533	-0.74	0.457	.2600647	1.833011
5		1.823219	1.530646	0.72	0.474	.351747	9.450339
6		1	(empty)				
household							
2		1.063416	.3027596	0.22	0.829	.6086418	1.857994
3		.6895344	.4202711	-0.61	0.542	.2088088	2.277001

4		.4687393	.300743	-1.18	0.238	.133291	1.648398
5		1.151728	.3793716	0.43	0.668	.6039068	2.196494
6		.3763582	.2901379	-1.27	0.205	.083062	1.705298
7		.5387415	.2632586	-1.27	0.206	.2067458	1.403861
age							
4		.8914799	.282908	-0.36	0.717	.4786144	1.660494
5		1.073584	.3492895	0.22	0.827	.5674122	2.031298
6		.9887748	.3193193	-0.03	0.972	.5250572	1.862036
drugs_weed		1.770487	.4984282	2.03	0.042	1.019676	3.074138
gun_threatened		1.145036	.2963255	0.52	0.601	.6895023	1.901529
drunk_beer_wine		1.67786	.814921	1.07	0.287	.6476422	4.346868
_cons		.3035646	.1768312	-2.05	0.041	.0969199	.9508007

```

-----
. logistic violent_group ib3.gang_degree gender i.unit_categ i.household i.age drugs_weed
gun_threatened drunk_beer_wine

```

```

Logistic regression                                Number of obs      =           369

                                                    LR chi2(20)         =           76.91

                                                    Prob > chi2         =           0.0000

Log likelihood = -175.12574                        Pseudo R2          =           0.1801

```

violent_group		Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P> z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
-----+-----							
gang_degree							
1		3.558575	1.372453	3.29	0.001	1.671048	7.578152
2		1.157686	.453168	0.37	0.708	.5375193	2.493375

gender		2.543288	.7668356	3.10	0.002	1.408467	4.592448
unit_categ							
2		.8806774	.3578726	-0.31	0.755	.3971203	1.953042
3		.4594466	.1643907	-2.17	0.030	.227863	.9263951
4		.4039395	.2319981	-1.58	0.114	.1310504	1.245072
5		.6060141	.5829235	-0.52	0.603	.0919844	3.99256
6		1.477172	2.197675	0.26	0.793	.0799924	27.27804
household							
2		.8325786	.2751406	-0.55	0.579	.4356426	1.591183
3		1.033785	.6906654	0.05	0.960	.2790924	3.829241
4		1.451745	.9390085	0.58	0.564	.4086216	5.157737

5		.6428996	.2646207	-1.07	0.283	.2869355	1.440463
6		.0999725	.1128757	-2.04	0.041	.0109349	.9139972
7		.229401	.1512107	-2.23	0.026	.0630263	.8349658
age							
4		1.31864	.4763005	0.77	0.444	.6496316	2.676611
5		1.229722	.4704155	0.54	0.589	.5810185	2.602699
6		.7461444	.2994645	-0.73	0.466	.3397768	1.638521
drugs_weed		2.054183	.7091203	2.09	0.037	1.044234	4.040924
gun_threatened		.4373924	.1370961	-2.64	0.008	.2366306	.8084841
drunk_beer_wine		2.555623	1.814233	1.32	0.186	.6356677	10.27456
_cons		.0741291	.0585666	-3.29	0.001	.0157575	.3487311

```
. logistic violent_selfdef ib3.gang_degree gender i.unit_categ i.household i.age drugs_weed
gun_threatened drunk_beer_wine
```

note: 6.unit_categ != 0 predicts success perfectly

6.unit_categ dropped and 2 obs not used

Logistic regression	Number of obs	=	367
	LR chi2(19)	=	78.28
	Prob > chi2	=	0.0000
Log likelihood = -112.39468	Pseudo R2	=	0.2583

```
-----
violent_selfdef | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-----+-----
```

```
gang_degree |
```

```
1 | 2.281255 1.132274 1.66 0.097 .8623625 6.034729
```

2		2.24714	.9920478	1.83	0.067	.9459084	5.338401
gender		.4545898	.1839869	-1.95	0.051	.2056418	1.004912
unit_categ							
2		.4547597	.2312871	-1.55	0.121	.1678293	1.232243
3		2.006666	1.023137	1.37	0.172	.738709	5.451006
4		1.100778	1.013845	0.10	0.917	.1810174	6.693892
5		.5745303	.6279507	-0.51	0.612	.0674475	4.893956
6		1	(empty)				
household							
2		.8280366	.4163233	-0.38	0.707	.309086	2.218298
3		.2823092	.2168788	-1.65	0.100	.0626333	1.272462

4		.0681722	.0523477	-3.50	0.000	.0151353	.3070597
5		.6997527	.3971897	-0.63	0.529	.2300331	2.128623
6		.6597176	.8327982	-0.33	0.742	.0555698	7.832079
7		.1377372	.0888632	-3.07	0.002	.0388943	.4877715
age							
4		.6753224	.3353907	-0.79	0.429	.2551362	1.787517
5		.7976654	.4240817	-0.43	0.671	.2813691	2.261336
6		.9588812	.4917061	-0.08	0.935	.3509747	2.619713
drugs_weed		4.138091	1.935512	3.04	0.002	1.654501	10.34983
gun_threatened		3.329774	1.64484	2.44	0.015	1.264557	8.767804
drunk_beer_wine		2.559199	1.379907	1.74	0.081	.8894891	7.363215
_cons		2.031137	1.504492	0.96	0.339	.4756003	8.674338

```
. logistic violent_ever ib3.gang_degree gender i.unit_categ i.household i.age drugs_weed
drunk_beer_wine
```

note: 6.unit_categ != 0 predicts success perfectly

6.unit_categ dropped and 2 obs not used

Logistic regression	Number of obs	=	367
	LR chi2(18)	=	93.15
	Prob > chi2	=	0.0000
Log likelihood = -207.77559	Pseudo R2	=	0.1831

```
-----
      violent_ever | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-----+-----
```

gang_degree							
1		4.617115	1.549696	4.56	0.000	2.391509	8.913935
2		1.982403	.6258047	2.17	0.030	1.067787	3.680435
gender		1.064241	.2749387	0.24	0.810	.6414137	1.7658
unit_categ							
2		.6315791	.2449287	-1.18	0.236	.2953444	1.3506
3		.715284	.2362545	-1.01	0.310	.374396	1.366551
4		.5997	.3166889	-0.97	0.333	.2130259	1.688246
5		1.456366	1.314971	0.42	0.677	.2481474	8.547346
6		1	(empty)				
household							

2		1.128824	.3471734	0.39	0.694	.6177838	2.062604
3		2.648565	1.745071	1.48	0.139	.7280751	9.634855
4		1.15864	.7298161	0.23	0.815	.3371202	3.9821
5		1.015363	.3660622	0.04	0.966	.5008911	2.058257
6		2.405827	2.319105	0.91	0.362	.363702	15.91413
7		.7964834	.4138573	-0.44	0.661	.2876654	2.205291
age							
4		.803798	.2712965	-0.65	0.518	.4148116	1.557553
5		1.241027	.4306084	0.62	0.534	.6286857	2.449791
6		1.741808	.6131949	1.58	0.115	.8736532	3.472654
drugs_weed		2.927654	.8219951	3.83	0.000	1.688607	5.075875
drunk_beer_wine		2.100604	1.150349	1.36	0.175	.7181295	6.144487

_cons	.1187306	.0768913	-3.29	0.001	.0333668	.4224841
-------	----------	----------	-------	-------	----------	----------

```
. reg violent_ever ib3.gang_degree gender i.unit_categ i.household i.age drugs_weed drunk_beer_wine
```

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs	=	369
-----+-----				F(19, 349)	=	5.66
Model	21.7425083	19	1.14434254	Prob > F	=	0.0000
Residual	70.5013941	349	.202009725	R-squared	=	0.2357
-----+-----				Adj R-squared	=	0.1941
Total	92.2439024	368	.250662778	Root MSE	=	.44945

violent_ever	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]
--------------	-------	-----------	---	------	----------------------

-----+-----						
gang_degree						
1		.3204665	.067478	4.75	0.000	.1877518 .4531811
2		.1382434	.0634876	2.18	0.030	.0133769 .2631099
gender		.0096703	.0514743	0.19	0.851	-.0915685 .1109091
unit_categ						
2		-.0839204	.0751699	-1.12	0.265	-.2317634 .0639226
3		-.0594792	.0652497	-0.91	0.363	-.1878114 .0688529
4		-.0980432	.1077742	-0.91	0.364	-.3100118 .1139255
5		.0805789	.1802099	0.45	0.655	-.2738551 .4350129
6		.1481863	.3255395	0.46	0.649	-.4920797 .7884523

household							
2		.0255678	.0611693	0.42	0.676	-.094739	.1458746
3		.1993021	.127122	1.57	0.118	-.0507195	.4493238
4		.0268338	.1267525	0.21	0.832	-.2224611	.2761286
5		.0067399	.0708527	0.10	0.924	-.1326122	.1460919
6		.1143174	.1549308	0.74	0.461	-.190398	.4190329
7		-.0361039	.0997572	-0.36	0.718	-.2323047	.160097
age							
4		-.03854	.067262	-0.57	0.567	-.1708299	.0937499
5		.0450133	.0693968	0.65	0.517	-.0914752	.1815017
6		.1054366	.0685967	1.54	0.125	-.0294783	.2403515
drugs_weed		.2374981	.0582946	4.07	0.000	.1228452	.3521509

drunk_beer_wine	.1070011	.0940501	1.14	0.256	-.0779751	.2919774
_cons	.0906341	.1166843	0.78	0.438	-.1388588	.320127
